The Beat Within

THE BEAT WITHIN ▪ A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE ▪ VOLUME 12.40

Well, the holidays are here as we kick this week's issue off the day before Halloween. And who can deny the fact that as children our favorite holiday is the one where we could eat candy without having to ask, or without having to be bribed into doing something for our parents. Halloween is a time where we could step outside of ourselves, even if for only a day, to become our favorite heroes or the most frightening villains we love to hate — a holiday where it's the norm to dress out of the norm, a night when we could wear our masks without people ridiculing us for it.

And even now as adults, whether it's Halloween or not, we still wear different masks. In fact, masks are necessary when living in a capitalistic country where what someone else thinks about us is essential to our existence. Think about it... Do we have the same facial expression when we're talking to our mothers that we do when we're talking to our lawyers? Or do we act the same way with our employers that we do with our homies? We couldn't because if that was the case we wouldn't be able to survive.

All in all, we know how different people in our lives will react to different ways of behaving, so in order to get what we want "trick or treat" we equip ourselves with different masks without even knowing it. We've learned, either inherently or by outside influences, how to manipulate situations to get our own desired outcomes. And this isn't just criminal behavior I'm talking about. Is it criminal for a daughter to ask her father for a brand new dress, knowing her mother wouldn't say yes if she asked her? Or is it criminal for a mother to tell her son he can get some Skittles if he finishes all of his vegetables? No, it's just the masks we wear in order to get what we want. Or even if it's so we don't get what we don't want.

For example, many young people we work with in our workshops, wear the "I'm the hardest and toughest thing breathing" mask in order to not appear weak in a place that jumps all over weakness like vultures to a freshly deceased carcass. And some young people will wear this mask throughout their time incarcerated never taking it off, even when they're by their selves.

These are the people who always tell fake war stories, or about what girls/boys they slept with, or about the crimes they committed and got away with. They're usually the people who claim to be the most profound hustlers but when it's time to go to the store they don't have any money on their books to buy anything. If you're incarcerated right now, I know you know someone who fits this description.

But then they're are the majority, who wear these masks until someone or something can come and get them to wear a different mask for the moment. When we're in our cells and we get a letter from our girlfriend or our mother telling us how much we're missed. If the timing is right and no one we don't trust is around, we'll take our jail mask off and put on our sad and feeling guilty mask. Or like when we're in workshops and a kid writes an incredible piece and reads it out loud at the end of the workshop. He's breaking that mask of being hard and to himself by becoming vulnerable by sharing something within him. This is what The Beat Within thrives on... We love it when we're able to influence someone to come out of that dark and lonely mask and reveal their true face — kind, caring, compassionate and innocent. It's our pay dirt.

Well again, Halloween is here and for most of us reading this, the holiday probably isn't nearly as anticipated as when we were kids, but it still signifies something, or at least to me. Halloween, as of today, for me symbolizes survival rather than a celebration for the dead. It projects the fact that we all wear masks all year around in order to get what we want or in order to not stir anything up. Without these masks, who would we be? And how would we survive...

Have as happy a Halloween as possible and don't forget to take your mask off and hang it up every now and then. It would be frightening if we became one of the horrendous masks we wear...

Thanks Will! Hope you also have a wonderful Halloween with your baby boy, his first!

OK, lets get busy with sharing this week's topics, and helping frame this fabulous 12.40 issue for you! The topics read and discussed aloud in our many workshops were, "Something You Always Wanted From Parents But Never Got... - Parents have a great influence on our lives, whether they're in our lives or not, so what we want you to tell us about this week is what is something you've always wanted from your parents but never got. It could be something material like a new video game system or a new pair of shoes, or it could be something deeper like love, patience, and/or respect. What is something you always wanted from your parents but never got?

Our second topic, "If You Were Making A Time Capsule, What Would You Put In It?" - A time capsule is a container that gets buried in the ground, to be dug up years later by scientists and researchers. When the time capsule gets taken out of the ground, people learn what life used to be like. If you had the opportunity to express the nature of your life, knowing it might be viewed hundreds of years from now, what would you put in your time capsule? You might choose objects that show what you care about and what you enjoy doing, the kind of person you are, your favorite things from home, what your family and the world around you are like. You can choose objects that show the way people live today, represent what you are worried about, the state of the earth or your city. So, what would you put in your time capsule?

The third topic. "Song Lyrics" - How does a song chorus, verse or any other lyric relate to your life? Bear in mind that it can be R&B, Rap, Gospel, Country, etc. Explain why and how it relates to your life, and please be sure to include the artist and song title in the piece that you write. (Don't just give us the song or the lyric and if you do, please explain why you chose that song or lyric)...

Last but not least, "If You Were Your Biggest Emotion, How Would You Describe Yourself?"

Knowing all this, we think you are so ready to enjoy the amazing pieces that are featured in this week's issue. We know we truly dug this week's read! Thanks writers!

Oh yeah, don't forget to write us when you leave the hall to get your latest Beat publication or to contribute a piece to The BWO (Beat WithOut) section of this great publication, The Beat Within. We seriously need your thoughts with masks on or not, hopefully with the old mask stripped down and off, so we readers can really get the 4-1-1 of what is going on in your head, what's it really like to sit in your cell, contemplatin' your freedom when you eventually walk out of jail, to worrying about your next court date, thinking about the time you will be serving, to the loss of your homie to gun violence, and the guilt you have for messing things up for you and your loved ones – to name a few. The more honest you are as a writer the better, not only for you, but for all of us. The bullshhh has to stop some time, might as well stop as you share ideas with us on paper, 'cause remember, nobody want to go to jail, let alone remain or return to jail. Think about making a contribution to The Beat community today! See you all in 12.41, this issue will be out before you can say, "where's my piece?" Watch. Later.

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At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco, Maricopa County Arizona, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Alameda, Bernalillio County New Mexico, Santa Cruz and Marin County Juvenile Halls. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at:

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Counselors' Corner

From The Beat: We couldn't ask for a better counselor to step up and participate in The Beat Within workshop, one of our favorites, Mr. Rossell, a Unit 12 Counselor, who always shows The Beat Within love. This week he steps up huge with a very telling on topic piece, "Time Capsule." We hope to read more from Mr. Rossell and all you thoughtful counselors down the road, The Beat pages are for you too! Thanks again Mr. Rossell!

My Time Capsule

What would I put in a time capsule? This is a great topic because two years ago I opened a time capsule that was buried 15 years prior. Inside the capsule I discovered a notebook that chronicled all of my high school years from 9th to 12th grade. I found pictures of really close friends that I have lost touch with through the years. There were old report cards, BART tickets, prom pictures, receipts from Burger King and key chains. I even named my favorite rap artist (Public Enemy) at the time.

The notebook also had future goals that I wished to accomplish at the time as well as countries I desired to travel or visit.

I must admit, the things that were important to me 17 years ago seem a far cry from my daily goals of today.

It was very emotional to see pictures of my mother, father, sisters, and close friends, when life seemed so simple.

It was amazing to see how many of my future goals I had accomplished, such as completing college and traveling to other countries.

I say all of this to say... I would put pictures of myself today in a time capsule just to see how much I age 15 years from now. I would make a CD of all my favorite songs. I would take a picture of a gas station to show the current gas prices as well as a picture of my family members and close friends. There would have to be some reference to today's political climate and the issues dealing with the Middle East.

All and all, I would do the same as I did 17 years ago, so that I could feel those old nostalgic emotions from the past.

My thought is that everyone should make a time capsule to learn about themselves.

-Mr. Rossell, Unit 12 Counselor, Alameda County

They have seen my stress, my love for my daughter and her mother. They know I want to change.

El Rasismo

En esta cárcel he vivido el racismo que los Afroamericanos nos tienen a nosotros. Cuando no hablas Inglés, te hechan de menos. Hasta la misma raza Latina es racista cuando no hablas Inglés. Pienso que si en los Estados Unidos no hubieran imigrantes no fuera un pais de trabajo.

Lo que los Estados debería de hacer es parar de deportar gente y enfocarse en los criminales que matan gente. Stop el racismo! No todos el imigrante viene aqui hacer males. Nosotros venimos con un sueño de venir a superarnos de la pobreza que tenemos en nuestro países de origen.

Yo me vine porque mi familia es muy pobre y no tienen con que pagar mis studios. Ahora que estoy aqui, mi familia recibe dinero para que coman.

Si supieran los Estdounidenses lo que uno pasa por ese camino para llegar acá, cuando pasas por cosas horrible que aveces no deseo recordar. Cuando el tren le trueza los pieces o a cualquier otra parte del cuerpo a una persona es algo feo ver. Aveces la misma gente te tiran del tren hacia abajo. Ya no quiero seguir con esta historia porque me da terror.

From The Beat: Sentimos mucho lo que has visto y sufrido durante tu camino hacia aca. Tambien nos da mucha lastima ver que despues de gran sacrificio no hayas tomado ventaja de esta oportunidad. Ya has pasado y vivido mucha cosas que te deben de ayudar a ser una persona mejor y pensar mejor las cosas antes de actuar. ¿Si pudieras hacer algo para que las cosas fueran diferentes, que hicieras? Tienes un gran talento en como expresar las cosas, usala y no la desperdicies. Hay mucha gente que dependen de ti. Piensa en ellos!

Racism

In this cell, I have lived the racism that exists among the Blacks and Latinos. When you don't speak English, they ignore you and even our own people treat you bad when you don't speak English. If immigrants didn't exist in the US, this wouldn't be a country of jobs.

What the US government should do is to stop deporting immigrants and have a better focus in criminals that kill people instead. Stop the racism! Not all immigrants come here to do bad things. We come here with the dream of overcoming the poverty that exist in our native lands.

I came here because my family is very poor and didn't have money to pay my school. Now that I'm here, my family receives money from me to eat. I wish they know the things we go through when coming here, and horrible things I wish not to remember. When you see the train running over people's legs or other parts of their bodies is something you wouldn't want to see. Sometimes the same people throw you from the train. I don't want to continue with this story because it's scaring me.

-Javier, San Francisco

From The Beat: We are sorry for the things you've seen and lived during your journey to the US. We also sorry for you by not taking advantage of the opportunity you had here after all the things you went through. You have lived and gone through things that can help you think better and think about things you do before acting. If you can do something to make things different in your life or in the US government, what would you do? You have talent in expressing yourself, use it and don't waste it. Always remember that there are people depending on you. Think about them!

Unos Minutos En Mi Celda

Las paredes de mi cuarto me conocen y han mirado como en realidad me siento y la persona que realidad soy. Me han visto llorar sin speranza. Ellas han pasado muchas noches enteras despierta junto conmigo. Han mirado mi estres, mi amor por mi hija y su madre. Ellas saben que quiero cambiar. Ella han mirado a esta persona que dice ser fuerte, poderosa, envidiosa y de grande orgullo. Ellas han mirado como en un segundo se convierte de en un mostro, maldoso o espartos a una persona buen con solo mirar la foto de su hija. Han mirado cuando se forman una lagrima en mis hojos sin poder con tenerme.

Me enojo conmigo y me digo, "¿qué te pasa? ¿Por qué tubistes que hacer lo que hicistes? En unos minutes perdistes todo lo que amabas, la mama de mi hija, mi hija, mi libertad, la confianza de los que me aman, y a mi familia, lo que siempre quise tener."

Todo lo perdi y ahora lo quiero recuperar pero ya es muy tarde porque todo lo perdi en unos cantos minutes.

From The Beat: Esperamos que esta experiencia y al ver esas paredes te ayuden a pensar bien en las cosas que estas haciendo mal en esta etapa de tu vida. Podemos podemos ver la reflección atravez de tus palabras. En el camino que estas caminando no te llebara a nada bueno solo te llebara a la misma compania que hoy tu tienes, las paredes. No te des por vencido. Nunca es tarde para recuperar las cosas perdidas. Sigue adelante que la vida sigue. Gracias por tus expresión talentosa.

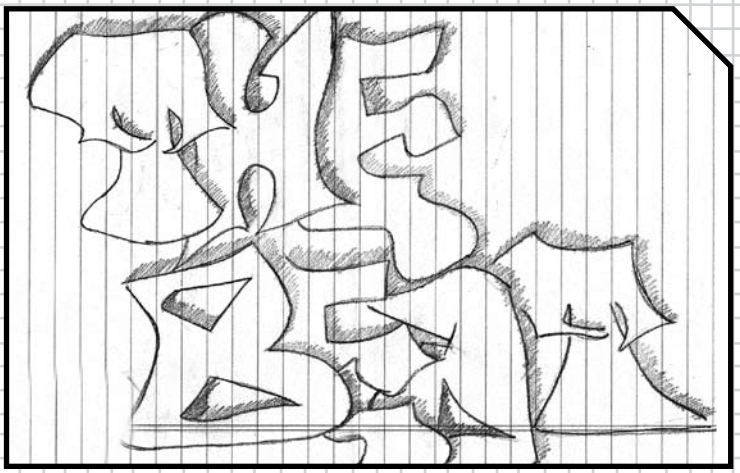
A Few Minutes In My Cell

The walls of my room know me and have seen how I really feel and who I really am. They have seen me crying with no hopes. They have spent many nights away with me. They have seen my stress, my love for my daughter and her mother. They know I want to change. They know this person who is supposedly strong, powerful, envy and very proud. They have seen how I turn from a bad monster into a calm and innocent man when I look at the picture of my daughter. They have seen how tears are formed on my cheek without being able to hold them.

I get mad at myself and I say to myself, "what's wrong? Why did you do what you did? In a few minutes you lost what you love, the mother of your daughter, my daughter, m your freedom, the trust of those who love you, your family, and what you always wanted to have." I lost it all and now I want to get all back, but it's too late. I lost it all in a few minutes.

-Ludio, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope this experience and seeing these walls helps you think better the things you are doing wrong in this phase of your life. We can see your reflection through your words and we hope you use it to never come back to this place. The road you've been walking won't take you anywhere but to the same companion you have right now, the walls. You people waiting for you. Don't give up. It's never too late to get back what you've left behind. Move on with your life because life continues. They're waiting for you!



My Time Capsule

If I were making my own time capsule, I would put a lot of stuff in it from over my 17 years on the planet. A couple things from each year that meant something to me.

From my first year, I would probably put my baby blanket, pacifier, and baby bottle. From my second year, I would probably put some diapers, stuffed animals. My third year, I would probably put in my Batman cereal box, Batman toys, Batman clothes. My fourth year, I would probably put like some food, toys, Monopoly, taped cartoons from 4 to 10.

For my tenth year I would put in some school books, money, shoes. 11th year I would put money, school work, phone numbers. It's a lot more stuff I could put in my time capsule and fill like 20 of them to the top, just enough to close it. But it is also some things I would not put in the time capsule because it is too valuable to give up, like family photos, birth certificates, family bar-bq invites, etc. Some stuff you want to be remembered, some you want to be treasured.

-Gold M, San Francisco

From The Beat: Do your still have your baby blanket, pacifier and baby bottle — not to mention old diapers? All we can say is that, after doing this work for many years, you will be someone we both remember and treasure. You always take our workshops seriously; you always give thought to what you write; you always hold yourself to the same standards you hold others to; and you almost always give us food for thought — like your final and very fine sentence. We thank you!

Dear God

Dear God, why you never get back at your comrade?
You know I lost my dad to the crack game like way back
Still ain't got jack
Where is the blessings at?
I'm stressing and I'm guessing
That you testing how I am going to react
Man, I'm telling you I'm finna to react with a bang
Contra Costa shhh spin off in this bank and
Do my own thing forgive me God I got to ride
And if you take this song the wrong way I apologize
Look in my mama eyes wondering why my mama cried
She said I moving too fast on the streets and one day I could die.
Hope you let me leave a child in my place
When I ride out to space
On a one way ticket
We talk face to face
Have a cup of coffee and kick it
I explaining to you how living life filled with pain in you
I know you love me God and I feel the same for you
That's why I came to you I have to write it out
On this piece of paper spit it out how I fight it out
May not of took the rightness routes in life
But you and I know that everybody ain't right
And I appreciate what you did for me as a kid
And now I see it made me as strong as I is
As long as I'm here I'm gone fight to the death of me
And spit more words more power for the weaponry
You know I'm defiantly not finna to give up now
you man I doing this for pop J- money and Jay
And all the other young soliders that got done in the bay.

-Chris, San Francisco

From The Beat: This prayer – from the heart, from the soul, and from the streets, is a call out for anyone who has called out in a faith that was troubled but still strong. The thing is, you how they say "God helps the man who helps himself." You have the talent, the strength, the intelligence, but if you want to get right, you need to DO right. What would that take? Help from a program, your church, counseling?

Time for a Change

Right now my mind is void.
Like all of my intelligent thoughts have been destroyed
I'm stuck between a rock and a hard place
Going about life with a scarred face
Because the system doesn't want to disregard race
They want us with shackles around our waist
And we're helping them by letting our talents go to waste
We lose our lives for a turf
That's going to be there long after we're in the dirt
It's sad that some of our greatest desires are to be placed on a t-shirt
Of a grieving friend that wants revenge in exchange for being hurt
It's like we're cursed from elementary
Destined to be dead or another number in the penitentiary
This is from someone who faces being locked down for half a century
We are judged by the color of our faces
It doesn't help that we catch cases
Because lord knows the system is racist
The whole judicial system is inhumane and cruel
But we aid them into locking us up by breaking a rule
In reality we're just tools…
Or "minorities" that the system uses to capture and pull
It's kind of like being trampled by a raging bull
But we'd rather be on the block and act a fool
Instead of getting the knowledge to fight that's found in school
We have the freedom of speech, so why not use our voices?
We are forced to believe that we only have two choices
And that's being a statistic or another number
Instead of getting smarter, we get dumber
I think it's time for a change…
A change from the fast lane
And into the one that leads to correctly using your brain
Because too many of us have been slain
Or imprisoned and bound by shackle and chain
We fake happiness to hide the pain
But what's to gain?
We strive for notoriety and fame
And glorify the perils of the game
Which swallows dreams and lives and who's to blame?
Think hard because you have the answer
We've become a disease to our society that's worse than cancer
In our hearts we hold the remedy
And that is us minorities coming together as one and not the enemy!

-Big Wayne, Alameda

From The Beat: This might be your most complex, thoughtful and inspiring poems yet – and that's saying a lot. Pick up on this last sentence and tell us – how would that happen? What would it take? When you look around your own unit, you can see examples of people being negative to each other even though they're all trapped in the same lockdown… so you have a perfect place to observe what brings out the worst, and best, in each person.

… some things I would not put in the time capsule because it is too valuable to give up, like family photos, birth certificates, family bar-bq invites, etc.

The Question, Why?

Why he put me on this earth
With no parents
No instructions
Unsolved mysteries
It's like alien abduction
Why he give me two eyes
One nose and five fingers?
And why all white people
Like to buy Beamers?
Always was poor
And never could afford
The dry cleaners
Why?
Why he give me this pencil
If he knew that T-Chilla would awaken?
And why he stop that old lady's soul from awakenin'?
And don't tell me why I like my coffee stirred
Not shaken
Why?
Why slavery still over
But we still slaves
In our own 'hoods?
Still using food stamps
And warming up canned goods
Why?
Why all our little black kids dying
And our mothers supposed to be strong
Instead they in the room
Off crack
Somewhere, probably crying?
Why?
Why it's eight years old
Boy soldiers in Africa
And when they see money and jewels
They after ya?
Why?
Why we so quick to make babies
And don't take care of it?
Then get strung out on drugs
So there's no one to take care of it?
Why?
Why they give us guns
And watch us kill ourselves?
Or worse
Get jealous and kill for wealth?
Man, I am just saying
This stuff ain't good for our health
Why?
Why they hiding all the smart and powerful books
On the shelf?
Why these thoughts keep coming to my head?
I don't know
But these are the thoughts of a genius
That's walking through the do'
Why?
Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side, San Francisco

From The Beat: Has writing your fabulous raps and poems caused another persona, creature, another part of you that you didn't know about, emerge? Has this shadow part of you morphed, grown since you started writing through him? What have you learned about yourself through T-Chilla? Who is the "they" that get your mothers strung out on drugs? Who gives so many of you guns and watches you kill yourselves? If you're right in what you imply, that white people conspire to get many of you addicted to drugs, to have babies fathers don't care for, what can all of you do to avoid that fate, resist and fight back? How can you help teach the young ones what you've already learned, so they can move past whatever has sabotaged your young life

So Silly

By the way
I woke up this morning
And put my skin on
Talking to my clone
In the mirror
And I ain't gotta whisper
'Cause I know Jesus hear us
Demons trying to come near us
White people fear us
Temptation steer us
It's getting loud in my head
And I can't stop the noise
Real men support theyselves
But I can't stop the boys
It's times like this
That make me wanna stop doing drugs
But soon as I get off them
I get to acting crazy
And shooting slugs
This is the story of my life
Get it straight
Rape my brain if you have to
You ain't gone find them memories
All it's gone say
In my head
Is "Misery loves company"
I feel like evil's humping me
I might as well be a test tube baby
'Cause I feel like a mom and dad
Never made me
I am like the Incredible Hawk
You don't wanna see me get mad
So dirty, I'll kiss rash
It's so cold in the world
They'll leave you walking with a shhh bag
My black women
Catching kids from these gangstas
Sending ya kids to kill
You's a gangsta dad
I am from a world
Where we'll brainwash our own siblings
I know folks who a teach us
To be racist
Off these drugs for so long
It leaves my brain spacious
I put my thoughts on a space ship
And I ain't tripping
If I ain't fitting in
'Cause in the end
Ain't nobody taking they body with them
Lying in the court
But the world know
That we the victims
They don't choose who we kill
We pick 'em
They just like boogers
When we flick 'em
Like rocks
We gotta kick 'em
Shoot for your goal
Don't stick 'em
Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side, San Francisco

From The Beat: You write that the big homies, and/or even dads, drug up and brainwash their young ones to be racist and to kill their enemies. That's really heavy. You also write that you, here, are victims, and that's true, but then you say that you choose this life, so you also create your own victims, right? When does this violence in the streets ever stop?

Something I Always Wanted

Since I was a little boy till now, I always been treated different than my sisters and brother. My dad never liked me. He always hit me and he never cared of me. He would never take me to places or buy me things. And my mom never cared of me either. She always took care of the other kids and not me. She would always hit me and she never gave me love. She never bought me anything, and she would always beat me up and she never took care of me.

So when I was six years old, my grandma took me to live with her and she took care of me. But when I turned 16, my mom took me to go live with her again, and I gave her another chance. But a week later she started to treat me bad. When I had money, she would take it away and spend it on the other kids.

And now that I'm in here she wants to give me love because it's her fault that I'm in here. She never took time to talk to me of what's right and wrong. And now that she wants to give me love, I tell her it's too late, I'm all grown up. So what I always wanted from my parents is love.

-Wanting Love, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Sorry about that Beat name, but you only gave us your last name and we can't put that in The Beat. Why do you think you were the one child your mom and dad singled out not to love and not to care for? Do you think your mom wants to give you love now because she feels guilty for how she treated you before? Is your grandmother still alive? Do you still have a relationship with her? Is your dad still living? Is he in your life at all? You say it's your mom's fault that you're here because she never taught you right from wrong, but didn't you know what you did to get here was wrong? We think you're justified in your anger against your parents for how they treated you, but at some point, you have to take responsibility for your own choices. Is this the time to do that?

I Refuse!

Life is full of mistakes and no one is perfect
To prevent a problem from happening you gotta start from the surface
Prayin' to God every day but yet still I don't learn shhh
Growing older every second but yet still my servant
To the system
And I'm targeted because I'm black
Struggling
I'm hustlin' because I refuse to lay flat
Put my hands behind my back
And give up my right that man in black
And blue
I refuse
I won't do
So I lace up my Jay's and keep it moving
Keep you clueless
Anticipating my next step
Stay ahead of myself and others
For the behalf of my next breath
And the test if life
I've passed it twice
Feel like I've been here once before
Ahead of my time in my prime
Bangin' on that death do'

-H-TwoOh-Cal, Alameda

From The Beat: Look at the defiance and passion in this poem. You have it in you to be a true soldier, a revolutionary, using your words to point to the truth and force us all to see what we'd rather be blind to. Can you do it if you're always on the run though? Dodging bullets, watching your back for enemies, watching your back for cops, not knowing whom to trust? A true soldier knows what he is fighting for. And if you are fighting for your freedom, you must give it everything you have, in every cell of your body. What would you need to give up? What would you need to seek out? What would you gain?

Wanting My Father's Love

Something that I always wanted from one of my parents, which is my father, is his love and respect. He has not claimed me every since I was born. He told my mama I wasn't his, well until I was 15, but now that he does say I'm his child, yet there is still no type of father daughter relationship and I wish he would be a father to me and not treat me the way he do.

He doesn't call me. He barely speaks to me when he sees me, and his family makes him speak to me and act like a father, but that's only in front of them. But when we're not at our family functions and back in our hometown he starts back acting the same.

He has never supported me in any kind of way but I hope and pray that he would show me that he loves me, like he loves his other kids because I am his second born and I look like he had me instead of my mama, because I'm the spitting image of him. But someday he'll maybe come around I hope.

- Sharenisha, Alameda

From The Beat: Oh such a shame. What will it take for your father to step up and be a father? Are you the only child he has with your mother? Is that also the problem? Too bad there is nothing you can do, He knows how you feel and what you want, but if he can't give you what you want, there isn't much you can do. It's a huge problem, but only he can take steps in correcting this.

My Time Capsule Of Determination And Discipline

If I were making a time capsule I would put in pictures of my football team. I would put my football pictures in the time capsule to show people in the future the exercise, dedication and good sportsmanship of my young years.

People would see how my football team practiced and what the hard work did for us. What it did for my team was that the way we practiced was shown on the field.

I would record my practices and my games for people might get the idea of how putting in hard work will get you somewhere in life.

My football team was the perfect example of determination and discipline of being what you want to be and that you can do anything if you put your mind to it.

-Roger, Alameda

From The Beat: Your story about football and explaining how determination, hard work, and dedication are the key parts of winning teach us all something about how we can be successful in life.

Letter

Hello, my name is known.

Since you found my box feel me I'm gonna let you know: 2007 don't go. It's not a year that you would want to be in. My peoples dyin' left and right. Young men and women are incarcerated everyday fo' stupid shhh.

It's sad to see the generation and how it's going downhill so fast. It's sad people act like they don't know what's wrong and young people are killing. It's goin' on. It ain't drugs, it ain't gangs, it's fools with hate.

I don't want to ruin yo' day but I hope today was a good day.

-Rick The Ruler, Alameda

From The Beat: Hate. You're right. And the drugs and guns just make that hate more deadly. So if 2007 is wrong, 2008 is just around the corner, and no one is going to make it better except us. If hate is the desease, what is the cure? Is it love, is it wisdom, is it young people like you finding a voice to shout out to the world that what is happening is NOT OK. You tell us, make your voice as powerful as it can be, help us find our lost children. After all, if the young people can't do it, who can?

To My Unit

This is something I want to tell my unit.

My unit, I been here long enough to be a staff. Just because I'm in these rooms don't mean nothin'. I know more things than most of these new staffs that work in Juvenile Hall.

But let me get to the point about what's on my mind. For you new cats, my unit been coo' -- until you immature lil' boys come into Max 4. The things y'all be doin' be messin' up my program, morning and afternoon shift. Like I said before, I'm tired of my staffs repeatin' themselves about rules and stuff. The reason why they be on us so much is because they want us to get right and change. It ain't about bein' hard or who got the biggest muscles, head, nose, and hands, or who got the most money or females.

It's about having a good future and a change of ways of life. Most of my staff be on me because they know I'm a good young man that's smart and has intelligence that I don't see in myself. They be on me 'cause I been here the longest and they expect me to be the perfect one and on point every time. They expect me to have my unit right, so we can get some fun staff like Playstations, Xboxes , pool tables and etc...

All I want ya new people to do is be koo' and mature up, 'cause life ain't always gonna be a game and a thang to laugh about. Stay on point. If you can't function in school, shut and act like you leaning. And keep all unnecessary stuff out the rooms, so when they do room search.

The staff gonna be like damn, I didn't find nothin'. When we on point, well ya'll gonna get good things comin' to ya' -- because next month, I'm gon' to the big house.

And at the big house, it ain't nobody that's gonna talk to you when you stress out or it ain't no tellin' you twice to go to your room. The staff at Rita or the Pen only gonna tell you once. If you don't listen, it's over. It's either get yo' butt kicked or get beat. That's the place where I --and y'all don't want to be.-- But I'm goin' to the big house. But Life – life is what I make it.

-Johnny, Alameda

From The Beat: There will be a great hole in the unit, and in our pages, when you leave for Santa Rita. You have been a leader, a joy, an enthusiastic participant in every workshop, and an open, thoughtful person right from the start. When you first came to the unit, in the old hall, you stood up and read every time, not worrying about saying your true feelings, and you won the respect of your peers. So we will say farewell to you, and all our prayers are with you as you move on to this new chapter. We have seen great maturity and change in you over your time here, and you leave a stronger, more mature, more confident person. We hope that once you adapt to these new surroundings you continue to find the light inside yourself and share it with others as you've done here. And we look forward to that first Beat Without piece, because no matter where you go or what you go through, we know you will never stop receiving and sharing knowledge.

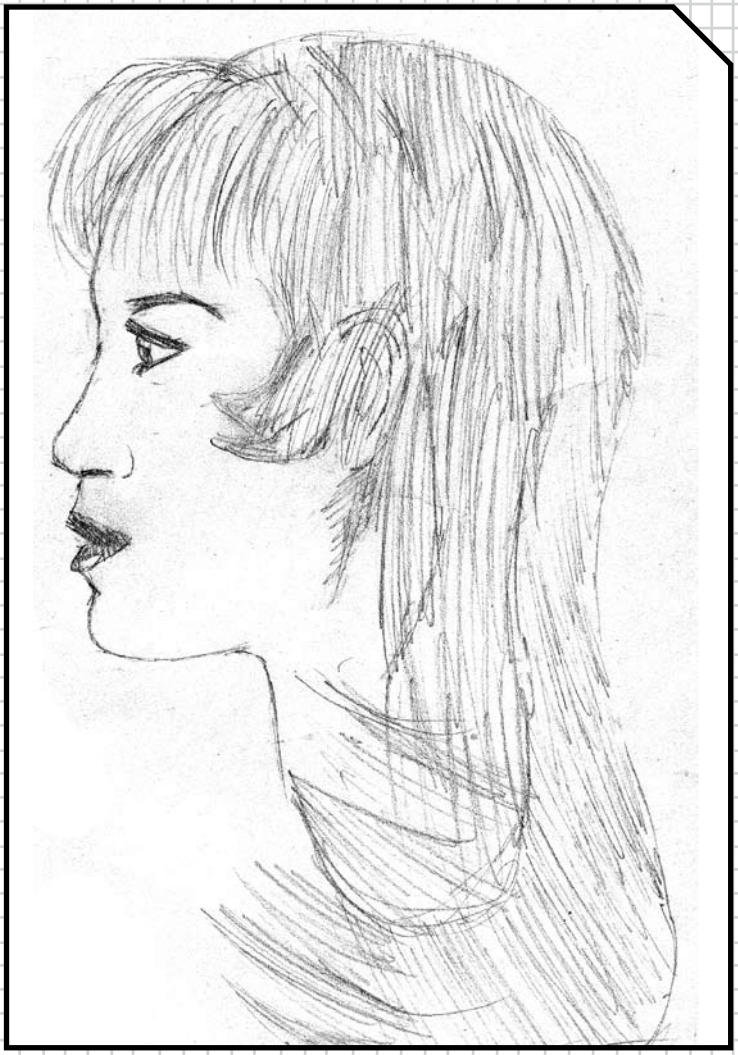
Something Missing

Man I didn't even have parents. Now one is dead and the other, my mom has stepped into my life (she was always in rehab). It's nice that's she's trying now, but I feel like the damage is done, that she will never really be a mother.

They say the first five years of a child's life shape how he will develop. When I have a kid I will never leave him alone with a cocaine. meth addict for a mother who gives him bottles full of spoiled milk. He will not grow up like me. No kid should go through the bull shhh that I did.

-Monk, Santa Clara

From The Beat: First off, we're sorry you had to feel this pain. But look how you turned the horrors you suffered into a promise of hope, you're already thinking that you will make sure the next generation gets more than you did. You see, this is what makes humans so amazing. Those first five years can teach us how NOT to live, how to do things differently. Isn't that what you just did?



Something I Always Wanted From My Parents...

Something I always wanted from my parents was love, attention from them too, and time together so we can understand each other more.

Well, they do give me love, but most of the time tough love too. I was raised up in a Asian (Vietnamese) family, so the relationship with our dads ain't that close as to our mom. Last year was one of the first time me and my dad actually started to have a better relationship, and I felt more loved from him more than I used to, and it felt good. But not until I was released from the Ranch and the next day he was murdered right in my house, Seeing him dead still haunts me until this day.

He should've made the relationship between us better sooner so I could've enjoyed it longer. And my mom, our relationship was a lot better then my dad, but the only thing was she always working 24/7, had no time to spend some time with me. Until now it's the same. The last time me, my brothers, sister and parents went on vacation together was when I was in 5th grade. Cong Cha nhu nui Thaison nghia me nhu nuoc trong nguon chay Ra...

I'm out Beat. Lates. Much love and respect homies. I ain't never forgotten about y'all.

-Viet Ox, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It is tragic to read a piece like this, VO. How did your father get killed? What about your relationship with your parents do you hope to change when you begin your own family? You might be surprised to find out that the Asian model of a distant father is not that different from how a lot of fathers behave toward their children in lots of different cultures.

Something I always Wanted From My Mother But Never Got...

At a young age my mother gave me everything love, video game system, computer, shoes, toys, patience, anger, respect, and everything I could ever think of.

She's been with me since my birth, there was nothing that she wouldn't do for me. She and I were together for 17 years, I never left her side.

Though my mother gave me everything I needed in life, I would never return what she wanted and it was my love and appreciation.

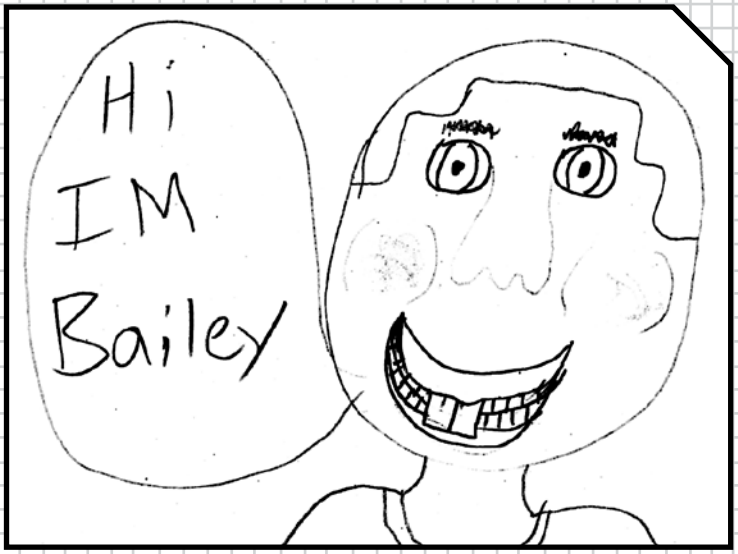
One day she just stopped. Her body didn't move, her pulse stopped, her breathing were gone. From then on, I became alone on to the world with what my mother gave me. Then one day I ended up in here Juvenile Hall because of a crime I committed.

My mother has given me everything. I'm grateful for my mothers teaching and regret my action toward her. My only desire I never got from her was her life, she didn't stay with me longer to help me and the only one to blame is myself for everything that has happen.

So something I always wanted from my mother but never got was her life.

-Potter, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What a moving story – though your mother is gone, her love for you and the things she taught you about life and what matters are yours to keep. Hold on to the love from those 17 years, they will give you the strength to give yourself the happiness your mother wanted for you.



More Support

Something I always wanted from my parents was for them to support me more in the things I do. To them it might seem useless, and pointless, for me it's something that I liked. And that is drawing.

They thought that it wouldn't get me nowhere but they don't know that. Now that time goes by I somewhat lose my interest in it. Also I always wanted to play sports but my parents didn't really support me in that. I mean I could just have joined a school team. But that wasn't the type of sports I liked.

Take karate as an example my parents never let me take classes. Even though they said they would. I feel that if my parents would have supported me in things that I wanted to do when I was younger, I probably would have never been involved in the system. I'd probably be a whole different person if my parents supported me more.

-Aren Walden House

From The Beat: Yeah, it always helps as a motivator when our parents support us in what we do and if they don't support us it can be very discouraging. Have you told them how you feel like you've told us? Sometimes parents don't realize the mistakes they've made unless we express how we feel to them. Are you still into drawing now even though you said you lost interest in it? Can we help you regain your interest in any way?

I feel that if my parents would have supported me in things that I wanted to do when I was younger, I probably would have never been involved in the system.

I Wanted Better Role Models

From my parents, I wanted better role models – people who watched you, made you feel safe. Parents who constantly pushed you to do good, helping you out in school. Parents who helped you be healthy and encouraged you to exercise. Not having someone else raise you. Not having parents who went to jail, not having your house get raided or had your parents on drugs. Just a decent parent with a good family. I'm not saying that my parents are not – it's just that we struggle and don't always do the right thing. When I have kids, I hope I don't introduce them to the world I was raised in.

-Mondo, Santa Clara

From The Beat: The things you wanted from your parents are a great list for you to think about as your get older and think about raising a family. What does it take – resource-wise – to be responsible for another human being? You seem to really know, now how can you make this a reality?

Sunshine

I'm in way too deep now.
I'm in way over my head.
The consequences lying ahead of me are something I dread.
I've seen the lowest of the low and been the highest of the high.
But when it's all over something insides you dies.
I could be a coward, lower my head and cry.
I could crawl in to my cell and then lie down and die.
But I know life is not over.
My heart tells me to fight and if I look hard enough,
I see my freedom in sight.
Though I am behind these bars,
I'll start my life anew.
Despite these walls around me, my sun will still shine through.

-Lil' Shadow, Alameda

From The Beat: This poem is extremely real and powerful. What are some of the ways you will start your life anew? We love the way you present your emotions throughout this poem. Does writing poems allow you to process your feelings and help you see how talented you are?

A Lesson To Be Learned

Man, the halls ain't a place to be, take it from me. I ain't been here but two weeks, and it's been the hardest two weeks of my life. 'Cause think about everything you had on the outs... It's gone! If you had a girl, she not yours no mo'. She belong to yo' boy now.

The worst thing to me is ma lil' brother. He all I think about. And ma brother worships da ground I walk on so let dis be a lesson learned, 'cause I damn sho' don't want ma brother in here. The best way is schoo'. Most ninjas don't think about dat when dey wit' dey ninjas, but they would now.

-Yung Thizz, San Francisco

From The Beat: If you've truly learned the lesson you say you've learned through this bitter experience, then maybe it is worth it. If you think about your lil' brother all the time, what do you think he's thinking about? When you get out of here, whatever you do, ask yourself if you'd like your little brother to do the same. If the answer is, "No," then don't do it, because as surely as the night follows the day, he will pattern his behavior after yours. Good luck.

It's All I Know!

They always asking me why I do the things I do.
I try tell them "It's all I know," but they ain't listening.
They ask me why my feelings are so numb to the fact that everything I do is wrong.
I tell them, "Because I seen it all go down right in front of my house--pimpin',
all the way to dope deals," but they ain't listening.
They ask me why I treat girls the way I treat them and I tell them,
"Because every time I turn around, they messin' with the next dude."
They ask me why I don't feel sorry for what I've done to the other side, and I tell them, "Because when I was in my mom's stomach, they tried to make her lose the baby, which was me," but they ain't listening.
They ask me why I love the 'hood so much and I tell them,
"Because it's where I grew up and plus, it got El Taco Loco.
They got some good ass pupusas, especially when you got the munchies.
Much love to all ...

-Menace, San Francisco

From The Beat: Menace, it's amazing to watch the essays you write for The Beat go from just hard core gangsta rhetoric to this really gutty description of what you've been through, even before you were born. Sometimes you seem like you're stranger, even to yourself, but somehow you seem like you're really examining how and why you evolved into who you've become and are starting to challenge yourself. We can tell you're willing to go through the mental and emotional pain, but maybe the results will be that you may seriously consider developing a real life off the streets someday!

Song Lyrics

How does lyrics to a song relate to my life? A chorus that relates to my life is a song by Wayne called "Get back to da money" 'cause that's what I'm 'bout. But a lil' line that keeps my head up in here is from 50 Cent "Mini Man". It goes:

"Some days wouldn't be special if it wasn't for rain
Joy wouldn't feel so good if it wasn't for pain
Death gotta be easy 'cause life is hard"
I repeat that line to stay focused, ya dig?

-Jr Rhyda, San Francisco

From The Beat: Thank you for doing what we asked — relating a song lyric to your own life. How do you plan to "get back to da money" without risking things that are, at least in our minds, more valuable than money, like life, love and freedom?

Wish My Parents Got Together

What's up wit' it Beaters! It's Chuccy droppin' some more lines up in this max unit, ya feel me. The topics are tough to choose from but lets see...

My whole life I've always wanted to see at least my parents together. I know that never is gonna happen and I wonder why I want that so bad. Honestly, I don't why. My pops would always give me a, "I don't know" answer when I would ask him why he and mom are not together. Shhh, they barely even talk. Actually, I think the only time they talked to each other is when I got locked up. Sometimes I think to myself is that what it takes to see them collaborate... me messing up! Because I know for damn sure when I was doing good and actually succeeding in something they still didn't talk.

That was something I always wanted from my parents but never got. I know a lot people are in the same situation as mines. But oh well, life's always going to be a struggle falling in and jumping out puddles. To everyone stay up and be coo'.

-Chuccy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Do you think that some of the trouble you've gotten yourself into is because you secretly wanted your parents to get together, even if the reason was a negative one? We don't think it's such a mystery why you always wanted your parents to get together. After all, you are a product of their union, so it is natural to want to feel complete and whole. But, like you said, life's always going to be a struggle.

Another Chance In Life!

What's up Beat Within? I'm just chillin' up in the halls thinking about when I'm getting out. It's hella boring up in here. I don't know what to do up in here. Just frustrated every day thinking about my family. The only thing that give me another day in life is God. I be praying to him give me another chance for I can be a better man in life.

I like to tell my family that it's not fun being up here because you lose your freedom, not being outside with your family. But that halls make you realize that when they let you get released, don't go back and do the same thing that you were doing or you going end back up in the halls.

That's all I got to say. Peace out, Beat Within. Late!

-Young Racs, San Francisco

From The Beat: If you apply the lesson that you've learned, you should be all right. But if you ignore that lesson and go back to do the same things that led you here, you're completely correct that you're going to end up facing the same consequence. Tell us what kind of man you'll be if God grants your prayer? What are the changes you would make in your life?

Needing Discipline

Something I needed from my parents is discipline. If my mama disciplined me when I was younger, I probably wouldn't do the things I do today I would probably look at life in a different perspective. I would look at it as if I have a whole life in me — someday I'll have a wife and kids, a nice car.

Now I just see money, guns and drugs. If I had discipline, I'd probably be in school, have a job, probably be a paper route boy instead of a duffel bag boy. I'd have more friends than enemies. I don't know why, but everybody hate me.

-J-R, San Francisco

From The Beat: It takes a certain maturity and self-awareness to identify discipline as the thing you missed growing up. But now you have to use that maturity in the way you wish your mama had used it: you have to discipline yourself! You can only hold your mother responsible for so long before you have to accept responsibility for your own actions. If you cannot exercise self-discipline, you are the one who will pay the price.

The Little Man In My Life

I have a little man in my life.
He brings me so much joy.
The day he came into my life,
Was a day I thought would never
be foretold. His eyes were small
and brown, fingers and toes
tiny and stumpy, but so cute.
Skin soft as fluffy clouds,
and a smile to brighten hearts
for miles and miles.
Who is this little man in my life...
he is my little baby boy!

-Lil' Sapaita, Santa Clara

From The Beat: As you write such beautiful poetry to your son, we wonder what you are doing to make sure you are not away from him again? Do the thoughts of him make you want to change your life for good?

Dreadlock Warriors

Pull, stretch, twist and lock
Friends approach him
Just so they can twist the rock
He kisses the block
With his soul
As the ticks on his clock
Continue to go
Tick-tock
Tick-tock-tick
Standing on the same corner
Waiting to die
He believes in something
That don't exist
All because of pride
All lies
That his best friend told him
Dreadlock warrior
Says he's lost his rocks
But his best friend stole them
Shooting dice
With your life
But who really rolled them?
His poison killed the old lady
But warrior
Already knew it was him

-Dark Side, San Francisco

From The Beat: What does this guy in your poem believe in that doesn't really exist? Why is he standing on the corner waiting to die? Do you have anyone in your life who you deeply trust? Who can trust you, no matter what? Or do lies and pride, selfishness, live in the heart of all relationships in the streets? Why do friends rip each other off, lie to each other? What is more valuable than friendship, in the streets?

Don't Give Up On Your Dream

Your dreams is something you shouldn't give up on, it's something you always stick with no matter what happen. People give up on their dreams every day because they are not focused.

That's why I encourage everyone not to give up on your Dream. Always find something that will keep you focus -- like me. Most people think that just because I'm in here I don't have high dreams. That's what keeps me focused.

-Lil' Ols, Alameda

From The Beat: The thoughts in here are worth remembering and holding onto for the rest of your life. You are keeping your eyes on the prize, and that's real. So tell us, what is you dream? What are you focusing on? What are your plans for achieving it?

Embrace A Thug

Embrace a thug wit' yo' heart an' soul
Give me comfort befo' my heart turns cold
Living a thug life that no one knows
Bleeding dat block feeling so alone

Can someone embrace dis thug
That need a hug being in danger
As my life at the edge of the cliff
Please lift me as my life move swiftly

My heart so stiffly turned cold hearted
Behind my unc life they took from me
Rooted wit' no sympathy toward da ones against me
Ruthless I recall toward al my enemies

Come an' embrace me with comfort an' energy
Lord take my soul an' lead what it's meant to be
'Cause living dis life I can say is hard to mute
With violence keep coming back exposing me to shoot

Embrace me. Embrace me. Please do it quickly
'Cause the life I live is death within me
Someone ¬embrace a thug

-Jay Pitt, San Francisco

From The Beat: What do you imagine your life is meant to be, JP? Is there any way that you can be the one embracing yourself, giving yourself the comfort that every human being craves, warming your own heart to see that everyone's loss is as great to them as your uncle's loss is to you? If the life you live is "death within you," then it's time to live a different life!

Time Capsule

Q-vole Beat? This be the homie Termite coming from the unit 7 dropping these firme lineas raw, real, and uncut.

If I were to put some stuff inside a capsule, it would contain: a butterfly knife, a $20 pack of cocaine, a 5th of Bacardi Limon, a bandana, an RIP shirt of my homie Rowdy, a couple of pictures of my family and my homies.

The reason why I would put a butterfly knife is because that was a part of my life at one time. I say at one time because I always used to roll around with one. The reason why I would put a $20 pack of cocaine is because that's the substance I like. But I've been sober for 235 days, so I would just put it to remind me of my old life. The 5th of Bacardi Limon I would put it to remind me also of my crazy days. I would put the bandana because that's what I represent. To me right now that's my life.

The reason why I would put that shirt of my homie Rowdy (RIP) is because he was one of the big homies that showed and had love for me. If I could go back I would take the bullets that stopped him. I love that homie Rowdy (RIP).

The pictures of the family would also be there because I love my family, but it seems like I can't stop gangbanging and hurting them. The pictures would be of my homies, ride or die partners and I would give my life in an instant for them.

-Termite, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is well written Termite, and we always appreciate that. We also admire your choice of things to include in the time capsule (and your honesty about them) that would give a future generation a picture of what your life was about (even if we wish it were about other things...) Are there other things you could have put in to paint a larger picture of life today, things that may not reflect your life in particular, but your times — like an iPod, a cell phone, newspaper stories from today, a car, etc.? As for your continuing gang activity that hurts your family, we think the most important word in that sentence is "seems". It may seem like you can't stop banging, but isn't that just a cop-out word for your own choices?

Familiar Faces

You remember me
'Cause I remember you
Now you're just another obstacle
For me to blast through
I got thoughts that would haunt your mind
Sweet dreams that could be your nightmares
Nightmares that would leave you traumatized
Done committed acts
That are unforgivable
God let go of my leash
At a young age
Told me he wanted no responsibility
For my action
So I run the streets
Do what I got to
Did what I had to
Never do too much
Or too little
Remember this
So that when I see you
You gotta remember this
'Cause I don't forget faces
I remember 'em

-Birdman, San Francisco

From The Beat: Whose face won't you forget? What has happened between whomever you're writing this to/about and you? Were you once friends, and now enemies? Do you believe that God's responsible for what everyone, including you, does? Or do you alone have to answer for whatever you do? Why are you blaming this person in your poem for whatever's wrong with your life? Why are you blaming God for letting go of your leash, effectively cutting you loose?

Sadness

Sadness swells and sometimes slices across old hurts.
What do you do when the one you trusted does not trust you?
Betrayal bites like a bee's indifferent sting
it causes sadness to swell and sometimes slices across old hurts.
I'll say this: "It can make you tired of trying.

-Lil' Shadow, Alameda

From The Beat: Your bee sting description is amazingly descriptive! It sometimes takes a while to develop trust and only a moment or two to loose it. Although you are tired, it's important to not give up. Perhaps you can lead by example and continue to trust and in time it will return to you.

I Wanted Trust From My Mom

Something I've always wanted from my Mom but never got is trust. When I was younger I only used to take only one thing from my Mom. I'll give you a hint it's green (sometimes purple) and it ain't crayons.

Well anyways that was the only thing I ever took from my Momma. She thought I was stealing money and stuff from her when I knew she was poor and we needed that money to live. It got so bad that she bought a lock and locked the door everyday. I tell her all the time, "If I wanted your shhh, I would take it, a lock ain't gonna stop me. "

She always says I took her stuff and that I better get it before I get in trouble. I tell her, "Mamma, did you look for it?" and she says "no!" She still makes me look for it or she'll lie and say she did look 'cause she thinks I took something. Even when I prove her wrong time and time again, she still believes I've taken her stuff.

-Hannibal, Alameda

From The Beat: Why do you suppose she thought you took her money when you didn't? Did she know you took her smoke? How did it get to this point? What will it take to communicate better with your mom?

What My Dad Said

What I never got from my parents or should say, what I never got from my dad was his love, or the chance to kick it with him or talk to him.

'Cause when I did, he told me that I was no good, and I am not going to make it in life. He said that he wasn't my dad and that I was a mistake.

I use to trip off it, but now I am just gonna say "fahgit him." It his bad, and I am not going to waste my time trying to talk to him. Well, I am out, take care one love one heart beat one struggle.

-Nino, Santa Clara

From The Beat: AAAARGH! This might not sound like a professional Beat response, but we'll say it again: AAARGH! Reading this just made us mad. No child should ever have to hear such harsh words from a father, and we pray and hope that you don't let these words get you down. No one but YOU can decide whether you will make it in life... and you are not a mistake. You are precious life, a miracle, like every life, and you deserve love and happiness and peace, and have every right to try and get it for yourself.

Clean And Sober

Something I always wanted from my mom was for her to raise me and take care of me instead of goin' out slanging dope all over San Jose & the East to all the homeboys/homegirls.

When I was growin' up she was me. So she ended up losing me and my grandparents adopted me because my mom was goin' in and out of jail for like 20 years. But now my mom is out of prison after doin 18 months.

Now my mom is in recovery with 3 years and 3 months clean and sober and is getting her life back together and takin' care of me and my 2 sisters.

So yeah, congratulations mom keep clean and sober and I will be home this month.

-Lil' Lazie, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It's inspiring to think that your mom managed to get herself back together. It proves that no matter how far you fall, you can still take come back up...a true redemption story. Have you forgiven her for what happened in the past? What kind of effect do you think her mistakes had on you? Do you think that you can learn from her recent success?

My Time Capsule

If I was going to have a time capsule and somebody would recover it later in the future, I would put a lot of stuff in there. I would put some Jordans in there because I like Jordans, and in the future, they probably won't have them. I would put a Lil' Wayne CD because right now I think Weezy is the best rapper alive. I would put a marker and some spray paint in there.

Also add a movie called "Piece By Piece" and maybe even a homemade movie of me and my homies doing damage. I would put some money in there so they know I was 'bout money. Probably add a sack of some trees since I used to blow every day. Put a picture of a car since I'm probably 'bout to have one when I come out (something like a Buick or a Chevy or some clean scraper).

I would put a picture of me with my family and a picture of me and my second family (homies). All this stuff represents about me and who I am. I probably got a lot more stuff, I just can't think of anything else right now.

-Marvin, San Francisco

From The Beat: We think you've done a good job of filling your time capsule with things that represent who you are. Can you think of other things that might tell future generations about life today, even if it is different from your life, like newspaper articles of the day, or TV shows maybe? The world is much bigger than our little part of it. We don't know the movie, "Piece By Piece." What's it about? Why do you think Lil' Wayne is the best rapper today? What's so special about him?

All I have left is a memory Of the beautiful sunrise

Escaping

You want my blood
Then take my blood
Shots to the stomach
Don't worry
'Cause it wasn't meant
For you to die
But one day
We all a see the sky
All I have left is a memory
Of the beautiful sunrise
And of my dad
As he made his son cry
Playing with these words
Trying to create a new picture
So we can look at the big picture
Man, I really miss her
But if the world knew
Who I was talking about
Then they would know why
I walk without
The temptation
To kill myself
But in the Bible, it says
"Love thy enemy
As you love thyself"
Brainwashed
So we love they wealth
And after they done using us like puppets
They sit us on the shelves
It's like we death
An' we can't hear ourselves
Scream for help
Shhh...
Listen, as my people get murdered
The more killings
The heavier the burden
I remember when
It all started
Ninth grade
I was at Burton
People start dropping
All because of birds chirping
Like this Chinese chick
We had at the school
Named Burden
And I never got it
But maybe we were just flirting
Going back to the streets
Gotta be alert
For them cats
That do dirt
Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side, San Francisco

From The Beat: You make it sound like there's no rest on the outs, just danger and drama. Who uses all of you, then leaves you on the shelf? How do you feel about what the Bible says about forgiveness? Can you do it with your whole heart? Do you forgive your dad, who hurt you? The person who shot your homie? Yourself? How does knowing that everybody, including your homies, your family and you, is going to die someday, affect your friends? Affect you? If we all could live forever if no one killed us, how would that change your homies and you? How would that affect the violence in the streets?

Never-Never-Never

Never believe what people tell you.
Never depend on anyone, but yourself.
Never put your trust into someone that you love.
Never give up on yourself, no matter what.
Never put your head down, when you're hurt.
Never stop believing in God and Jesus.
Never stop having faith in yourself.
Never cry yourself to sleep at night.
Never wish for something that ain't true.
Never say you can't do anything.
Never let someone mess your life up.
Never let someone tell you what you are.
Never stop loving yourself.
Never let one person hold you back.
Never let someone tell you that you don't have wisdom.
Never let someone speak about your life.
Never stop caring about your family.
Never stop being yourself to impress others.
Never stop doing what you want to do.
Never fall in love with someone.
Never open your heart to anybody.
Never stop believing in your goals.
Never give up on your goals for success.
Never let someone hold from going forward.
Never let someone stop you from having a great life.
Never let yourself down at all.
Never fall off track and off task.
Never let someone break your inner beast.
Never say that you're going to try.
Never say never about yourself and your life.
Keep your head towards the sky at all times for help and for a sign of success for you and only you, nobody else. You're by yourself in this world.

-Lil' Shadow, Alameda

From The Beat: Your writing is thoughtful and provoking. It seems like this poem has a lot of "don'ts", it would be interesting to see your list of "dos". It can be frightening to let someone into your heart, but there can be a lot of goodness that can unfold from being loved. Do you agree or disagree with this idea?

The Fire

I try to keep it at bay, but people keep feeding the fire.
I've kept the blood colored hate hidden for as long as I could,
but they provoked a livewire.
No matter how well I mask it and try to channel emotions,
dumb asses always evoke the worst in me, and I deteriorate
like layers from an erosion.
They want to see me resort to exploding,
I won't let them, at least I hope not.
But even the best cooks sometimes overflow pots.
It's hard to keep track of my anger.
This is the reason I write poems with symbolic metaphors.
Strangers hear and see the picture I paint,
but if they feel what I feel I swear to God I think they'll crumble and faint.
I keep it in, it rolls around like a tire, and my only wish is that people stop feeding
the fire.

-Sticky, Alameda

From The Beat: Your poems and metaphors are extremely vivid and powerful. Your talent is a great way to avoid masking and keeping in your anger inside. Similar to the cook's pot you described, emotions bottled up will eventually overflow.

Lost Soldier: RIP Emmit

My ninja, you gone bra, why you bra?
Outta everybody in the world, Emmit Moore had to go bra.
Out of all we been through.
You will neva be forgotten no matter what bra,
This shhh hurt deeply, Emmit bra'…
On some real shhh.
But it's like you are the only one I can talk to E.
Bra you brought me back to the real me Emmit.
How, I don't know ninja, but you did it like what.
Now I gotta thug it out
Wait for me at them pearly gates bra.
I had a dream about you were alive, and you kept on telling me you weren't dead.
But all I did was cry, and when I woke up I had tears on my face.

-Isaac, Alameda

From The Beat: If what you say is true, and Emmit brought back the real you/than that dream was for real, because he'll stay alive in your heart so long as you can feel.

Keep It On Humble

I'm a good type ninja, keep shhh on humble
No talkin' at all, not even a mumble

Keep my emotions inside, let my feelings out later
Some ninjas need forgiveness, others need prayers

If they don't like it, they want to sit around and hate
I'm sittin' big, while you gettin' scraped off a plate

Your style is different, my style unique
Some for the public, my raps for keep

Solid, not light as a feather
People can't get me hot, not even the summer weather

I'm going to strive for my goal
Grow to the top, 'til my blood turn cold

-Lil' Curti Bo, Alameda

From The Beat: Another great flow from young Curti Bo – should we start having you sign your autographs on your pieces now, so we can prove we knew you before you blew up?

Real Talk

Real talk though. It's about time for a ninja to step his game up and get on some new shhh, because these days that robbin' and killin' ain't gon' do nothin' but get a ninja killed or sent to jail for the rest of his life.

A ninja like me can't go out like that, because I'm a bigger person than that. Plus I got too much to live fo'. I just want to say to all y'all youngstas out there thinkin' this shhh out here a game, please man you can have the most gas in the world and still get knocked down, so stop playin' 'cause this shhh is real.

Too many of my potnas done got killed or sent to the pen for me not to realize I could be next on that list. So that's why it's time fo' me to stop bein' hard and start thinking smart, know what I'm talking 'bout?

So if you was real hitter like me you will wake up and be a leader and stop being a follower. Real talk.

-LaRon, Alameda

From The Beat: This is so real that if everyone in the hall followed what you say (including you) then you could put the whole facility out of business. No one would be coming to jail. The funeral directors would have to find a new job. The streets would be safe. The little kids would grow up with a future… your families would stop crying. Just imagine. Your real talk is a true vision.

Life

Why is life so mess up for me the reason I ask is because it been so hard for me this past years and now it feels like my life is a hole.

Each time I am almost out I fall right back in and now it seem like I can't get out.

It all started when my mom got shot. When I first heard about it I went into shock because it was so unexpected I did not know what to do because I was so young at the time.

Everyday I wake without her love and beautiful smile it hurts so bad inside. And when my dad got in a motorcycle accident the doctor didn't know if he was going to live that's when I fell deeper in the hole.

-Lil' Mel, Alameda

From The Beat: We're so sorry to hear about your mom and your dad's accident. How's your dad doing since his motorcycle accident? These are tough times, we hope you have the outlet to talk and write about these pains, before you fall deeper in the hole.

End of The Road

Baby
Time flies past and it's never slow
Once we join together both hearts will glow
So bright the sun get mad because we're the center hold
Kissing yo' lips they so soft they just like a baby's toe
Every time
I think about you
My throat gets tight
Because these tears I fight
And my eyes ain't feelin' right
I know we often have our battles
Arguments and fights
But like Tyson I'ma knock 'em out
And you'll be my wife in the spotlight
I wish I could turn back time
And break free from all struggles
But I get angry and commit crimes
So like a dog I need a muzzle
See relationship equals pain
But there's always a player in the game
You seek me as one
But I'll never put pain under your name
Now the story is untold
But like a book the pages would unfold
Baby I love you and hope you stay
Until the end of the road

-Justin, Alameda

From The Beat: Your love poem is even the more powerful for the way it acknowledges how hard love can be sometimes…. We hope you and your girl find your way back to each other – and as for that muzzle, maybe it's not what you need. Because what separates us from dogs is that we can unlearn the negativity that we've learned.

A Young Man's Struggle

Why the black man have to struggle
Why we always left to hustle because the white man
don't want us to have nothing
But we be breakin' our back tryna be something
We got mothers, sisters, daughters, sons, and nieces to
feed
And they really don't want a black man to succeed
Until we bleed and we six feet deep
They gon' keep on diggin' until we fell in so deep
But we got to peep there's another way
We don't always have to solve problems with choppa's,
uzi's, and AK's
But the way to solve the problem you have to look at
yourself and your situation
And see the problem because if you want to see a
change,
You have to be the change.
Life is more than being rich, havin' Gucci and diamond
chains
Does it really matter about the materialistic shhh
Is it worth dyin' off some shhh that you ain't even gon'
leave this earth with
We just all need to come together in our communities
Other than sell rocks and hop
Start makin more programs in our communities
We ain't gon' stop until something drastic happen
Until we all left nothin' and we gon' be like what
happened
It's the white man plan to let us all fall into our own
destruction
If they don't believe a black can't do nothin'
I'm gon' be something.
Forget stereotypes and all the odds against me
And since I'm in Juvenile Hall that don't mean I can't
soar freely
It's all in your mind and where you take it
'Cause a mind is a terrible thing to waste
But if you can't, somebody gon' try to control it
I'm done with this, I'ma make a change in this twist
And for all the ninjas that said I wasn't gon' make it...
Ninja... I'm gon' make it

-Kevin, Alameda

From The Beat: A mind is a terrible thing to waste, especially a mind that could create such an incredible poem, a poem that describes the messed up world and also calls on all of us to clean that world up, starting with ourselves. You know where that expression about the mind came from? Those old commercials for the United Negro College Fund... because education is the key to moving up. That's how you can make it, by getting yourself that education. You deserve college – are you going to make it happen?

When You See Me

When you see me
What do you see and what do you think?
And why do you see this of me?
But to let you know
When I roll through yo' 'hood
Or yo' block
And you see me
Don't throw up stuff at me
'Cause I ain't rollin' with no crew or click
I'm with my baby girl and my daughter
So leave me alone
And leave me out of yo' life
'Cause you ain't in mines
So when you see me
Don't see me as your enemy
Just keep walkin'
And continue your life
'Cause I'm not messin' with you
So peace
And have a great life

-Chepe, Marin

From The Beat: You've made some very good choices. Did you used to be in a crew or rep a 'hood, but now you've chosen to hang with your young family? Have people who might otherwise try to mess with you now leave you alone?

Caged In

Life in juvenile hall is crazy and some people who don't know about it should know that this isn't the life that people want to live.

You get told when to go out and when to take a shower and when to eat. They might as well tell us when to breathe. They lock you down as if you were an animal. People shouldn't be treated like this for petty crimes.

-Benjamin, Alameda

From The Beat: We wish everyone could know what it's truly like for all our young writers. That's why we post on the website, so that people who are just out living their lives without caring will know that it's a whole world of pain and sadness, and sometimes hope, happening behind walls where no one sees it. That's why you writers are so important, because you've seen what others would like to stay blind to. Keep writing, don't let them!

I'm Tired of Running...

I'm tired of running from the law.
I'm sitting on my porch watching the law pass.
I wonder why I feel like the enemy
When they're supposed to be here protecting me.
I stand on the corner serving dope fiends.
Now I'm sitting here
Wondering why I'm out here killing my community.
I finally noticed that there is no one to catch you when
you falling.
No one to hear you when you calling.
I thought I wasn't gonna get caught 'cause I was way too
clever,
just tryin' to make that cheddar.
Now I'm writing this letter.
Do you know what it feels like to wake up in the
morning starving
Hearing bugs crawling?
I'M TIRED OF RUNNING!!!

-Young Squeaks, Alameda

From The Beat: There IS someone to catch you when you fall, and that is you, Young Squeaks. With this powerful and urgent poem, you enter the ranks of some of our finest writers and teachers, the ones who stand up and say NO to the killing machines that are destroying our communities. So now you have to back up those words with your actions. What will those actions be?

Trust

Something I never got from my parents was trust. They trust me, but I want more than their trust for me to go to the store for them. I want them to trust me when I am with my friends.

When I am out late they will call me to say "where you at?" and that makes me mad. They know I am with my friends. My mom tells me to be careful sometimes because she is worrying too much. When they are worrying about me I think they don't trust me. When they call me telling me to come home, they think I'm always doing bad stuff.

Then the one day, they did not call me, I did something bad and I ended up here. Then they visited me and said they lost all the trust for me and they were mad but they still love me.

-Charles, Alameda

From The Beat: Have you had the chance to tell your parents how you feel, and ask them what it means for them to trust you? Sometimes, moms and dads have a hard time trusting not because they don't believe in or love their children, but rather they are afraid to see their children hurt.

Reflection

I got a lot on my mind right now. When I first came back here I was on my home pass with only 24 days left at my group home, 18 not counting the weekends. I got caught up and was about to take my case to trial, but I didn't. When I first got here I was stressed out because I didn't know where I was going.

I went to court on the 27th of September and I thought I was just gonna hear them tell me I was going back to my group home. They told me I had to wait 60 more days. I wasn't really trippin until my Auntie died last week and now I don't know if they are gonna let me go to her funeral. I stressed out all day, everyday and even right now.

I've also been stressing today because it's my Mom's birthday and I can't even tell her happy birthday. There is really nothin' I could do, but just wait till they let me out. Then I will be able to do what I what and not what people in here tell me to do.

-Dirty D

From The Beat: It must be hard for you not being able to be there for your family! How did you get caught up? What can you do to avoid missing moments like this in the future?

Remote Control Gas Powered Car

Something I never got was a remote control gas powered car that costs $650.

I begged my mom and grandpa for it and I got it after I begged for a straight week.

I cried and they were like, "we have no money." But I started getting smarter, because I knew that my grandpa had a credit card.

I started asking, "why can't you use your credit card, it's just like money."

He would say, "why should I buy it for you, you've been bad at school."

So I replied, "you should do it because you love me,"

He finally broke down.

When my Mom found out she was so mad because I was telling my grandpa that my mom would pay for it knowing that she wasn't going to pay for anything, so that's my story.

-Derik

From The Beat: Do you think it is fair to get things that we haven't earned, why or why not? Do you think it was fair to lie to your Grandpa? It was smart to create an argument about the credit card, maybe there was another way for you to use your mind in order to earn your gas powered car.

Song Lyrics

The song I chose for y'all is by Fantasia, "When I see you." That song fits perfect with my relationship with my girl right now. While I've been in here all I can think about is when I see her. So when that song comes on in my room, I goes dumb!!! Some of the lyric that explain me to her is when she says, "what's the reason why." I was diggin' her on the outs, but when I talk to her in here it's like she is the one! But probably when I get out I am going to see her a couple of times and then look for more fish in the sea.

- Boi A

From The Beat: It's great when a song can express how we feel. How do the lyrics explain you to her? It seems like you really like her, but when you're on the outs your feelings change, why so? Keep it real with her!

More From My Dad

I never had nothin' from my father. My mom showed me all the attention. My daddy walked out on me and my momma when I was about three or four years old. Then he started checking in on me, but never taught me nothing, he would just buy me things. My Mom took care of me all my life and she taught me right from wrong. My Daddy ain't taught me nothin'

-Gayland

From The Beat: It's difficult when our parents split up. Our parents try to do what's best for us, but sometimes they have a hard time. Although you wanted your Dad to teach you different things, it seems like he tries to be in your life, even if he just buys you things. What are the things you wish your Dad would teach you?

My Time Capsule

Something I would put in a time capsule.... Hmmm the first thing I would put in there would have to be an album. That is something that just doesn't only tell of this time but about the future too. I have to go with Mac Dre, whether it's "Genie of the Lamp" or "Rapper gone Bad."

The second thing would be my ALACO wristband, to show that I've been to hell and back.

- I'm Back

From The Beat: Nice. Why do you feel Mac Dre's album tells about this time and the future? Adding your wristband to the capsule is an extremely creative idea! It would be interesting to hear your story about being to hell and back. Would you like to include your story in the time capsule, so that people in the future could hear your thoughts?

Now I Understand...

I wanted my mom to buy a car but my Mom would you tell me, "When you get a job," you can buy yourself whatever you want.

So now I understand why my mother would tell me that.

Well, that's how all I have to say.

-Lazy

From The Beat: What happened to change your mind? Was it coming in here? Was it talking to someone who gave you a different point of view? Was it just getting older?

All Bad

This is Baby "Tok" from the city of champs (Inglewood, CA). Been here since March 29, 2007. I did a favor for a ninja and he got caught and then he punked out and snitched. That ain't cool. So yeah they sent me to camp, I did four months and a week. Then I saw fool who snitched on me, so I ran up on him and we got down. So now they sent me here and I have a new case 'cause me and my homeboy jumped him.

-Baby "Tok"

From The Beat: Looking back, what do think about the decisions you made in the past? Sometimes it is hard to walk away, but do you seen any benefit in doing so?

Memorize

Missing them days when I was out there listening to X-Rated and C-Bo, playing football for an American football team. Missing them days out there with my bras and patnas, when we were sippin' and smokin'. Missing them days when I was kickin it with my friends. Missing them days when I was free... because now I'm locked up. So they treat me like a slave .... What's up to all ... Missing my family... I'm out.

-Baby "Tok"

From The Beat: What position did you play on your football team? Sounds like you got a lot going on in the outs. What have you learned that could avoid you having to miss you family and friends again in the future? Think about how you have let the hood/gang put you in this position.

Reflection

Me and my family used to do as whole lot of things. I remember when I was in the sixth grade and I was getting with all the girls. My mom was scared that I was going to have sex at a young age, so she told me to wear a condom. But I told her I wasn't ready for sex.

I remember when I used to take my little brother to the park. He was crying and I didn't know what was wrong with him. I was really scared, I didn't now what to do. I felt like I wanted to call the ambulance I was that scared.

-Derik

From The Beat: What kinds of things did you do with your family? How did you feel about talking about safe sex with your Mom? That must have been a scary experience with your little brother at the park. How did you resolve the situation?

I Wanted Their Presence And Love

Something that I always wanted from my parents is for them to be there for me.

When you're a kid growing up without a mom or a dad it's hard. Living with strangers that are forced upon you is hard. Living with my Aunty in California was new to me.

So if I really wanted something from my Parents it would be that they were in my life.

-Lewis

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing a little of your story with us. It must be extremely hard to have strangers forced upon you. What was/ is it like for you in California? Did you like your stay there with your Aunty?

Reflection

I'm hella mad I ain't at camp yet.
I got sentenced like a few weeks ago,
I can't be mad at no one but myself.
I guess they got me on hold or something,
but whatever I'll get there when I get there.

- B

From The Beat: Yes you will get to camp when the hall and camp are ready for you.

Shawnty Remix song

Man, a song's lyrics that has the best break up song for me is the Shawnty Remix song. I think it's the best break up song for me because the artist speaks about his girl and how real it is when you fall in love with that person.

I fell in love with this one light skinned girl. I haven't got a chance to talk to her, but from listening to that song it makes you fall in love and out of love at the same time. But for that one girl this one is for you and only you.

-Lil' Shadow

From The Beat: It is nice when a song can express how you feel. It was an interesting comment you made about fall in love and then out of love at the same time. How do you think that something like that happens?

Reflection

This is Dennis, I find myself locked up again, but it wasn't from a crime I committed, so I guess I'm getting to be a better person. I'm am stressing out and I can't wait to get out to see my Baby's Mama. I'm really missing some of the things we used to do and I'm also missing my family, so I can't wait to get this time over with.

-Dennis

From The Beat: What are some of your favorite things to do with your baby's mama? Although you didn't commit a crime, what are the ways for you to avoid having to be away from the ones you love in the future?

Time Being Locked Up

Time being locked up doesn't do anything any good for you. It just makes you mad because you are taken away from the ones you love and the angry builds inside you. You try to fight but your feelings overcome you.

You don't have to do time or programs to make you change. It's all about how you feel and if your tired of makin' people sad or your moms cry.

-Chino

From The Beat: What are some of the ways you have developed to deal with the anger you mentioned? Also your argument is very powerful. What are some other alternatives to being locked that you would suggest?

Trapped

I'm trapped in the place that's like a junior hell. A
sking God to have mercy and let me place my bail.
My soul is corrupted, my heart is evil, but yet my mind
is still with God.
I put the pedal to the metal as I'm running from the
devil,
his lieutenants and Generals.
I pray my hardest, but damn no answer as I dial up
Jesus on speed dial.
Still running, I run into a big enormous mirror
thinking I'm running from the devil;
but I'm really running from myself,
Little Evil Knievel, the devil's son.
My nose is dirty;
I'm losing my mind, as I'm high in the sky.
Hit 'em with something big and when I look up at the
mirror I looked in a casket,
but when push came to shove, when I woke up I really
didn't wake up
'cause it was me Evil Knievel in the casket.

-Lil' TwoOne

From The Beat: It makes sense that you feel you have God on your mind; you are not corrupted in your soul or your heart. Life can be overwhelming, but all we can do is take it one step at a time. What do think about seeing you in a casket? Are there choices you can make in the future that will avoid this from happening?

Straight Release

Basically what's been on my mind recently is the straight release that the judge gave me. He told me he was going to send me to camp about nine months ago, but I stood up in court, talked to him, and he gave me ankle monitor.

I got home, and two days after that my father went bad and complained that he couldn't take it that me and my sister were both on ankle monitor so he told them to turn my anklet off and to send me to camp.

Or he said I could leave the house. I left, I left and never came back. It's been nine months I've been on the run and has pulled over in a park for nothing. They checked my ID, and two warrants came up. They sent me to the hall, and my P-O came to interview me.

On the outs doing those a months I've been doing really good. I haven't caught any cases, I've been doing really good. I haven't caught and cases, I've had two jobs, and have been doing volunteer work working with kids. She reconfirmed all the things I said I had done with the program directors, and called my jobs etc. and said be ready to be sent to camp, but hopefully this all works out

-Rashaad

From The Beat: Good luck Rashaad – we're sorry that family drama has made it hard for you to stay on the right side of the law. Have you and your father gotten a chance to talk about what happened? Where did you live while you were on the run?

Where Marcus Come From?

Where I come from there is a lot of violence in my neighborhood.
Where I come from it be shooting I broad daylight.
Where I come from it is people in Lexo's and Vans
Where I come from, there's a lot of Chicanos that I hang with.
Where I come from it be a bunch of girls running around.
Where I come from, it is a lot of guns and drug trafficing going on.
This place is in Oakland.

-Lil' Marcus

From The Beat: We love the way you show all the different glimpses of your 'hood...And with all these problems, we know you love where you are from, because it's home. What would it take to make your neighborhood a place without shootings, without violence, without guns and drug trafficking? Because we think you and your loved ones deserve safety and peace where you live.

Marcus: The Time Capsule

If I were making a time capsule, I would put a lot of pictures of girls, to show my interest in girls. I would put a lot of money in there to show how hard I hustled. I would put all the video games in there that I like to play to show that I don't be in the streets all day (sometimes).

I would put a symbol that represents the struggle. I would put a hand sign to show where I came from.

-Lil' Marcus

From The Beat: We hope you'd also put in some of the great pieces you've written for The Beat, so future people could get a glimpse of the thoughts that run through your mind. They could see both the inside and the outside of what it means to be Lil Marcus.

My Favorite Lyrics

The song lyrics that relate to my life is "Wayne", and "Mac-Dee."

The reason why I choose those songs because they speak the things, and situations I've really been through.

The stuff they say I can relate to ...without a doubt, it's real talk. They keep it so solid wit' people and tell how they grew up struggling in the ghetto streets.

That's why I choose those songs, they real, and keep me "thinking." I'm out.

-Doogie Baby

From The Beat: Next time you write for us, we're going to ask you to pick a couple of lyrics so we can see which parts you related to best, which ones felt the most real, and especially the ones that made you "think" like you say, and what kind of thoughts they make you have.

Released

Tomorrow I am getting released on ankle monitor. I thought I was gonna stay up in here longer. I went to court today. It's 10/2/07 and I took my case to trial. I was in the court room for like two hours.

I was so bored up in there but hey you know what? Being bored for them two hours was worth it, now I'm getting released tomorrow. 'Bout to get out, smoke some blunts and enjoy being in the hood. After I do that, I'm gonna wait a month and wait for The Beat Within newspaper and enjoy reading all the poems and the stories all the people behind walls have written.

-Miclo

From The Beat: We hope you didn't do what this piece said. It's a tough game out there, and you need your wits about you. Good luck, and remember: You don't need anything that will "blunt" your intelligence, your willpower, or your determination to succeed!

My Mother's Respect

I always wanted my parents to show me the same respect as my big brother. My mom always been lightweight hard on my big brother, to make him tougher. Don't get me wrong, my big brother has always been the one to Ride or die.

I really didn't like the way my mom treated me like a baby. I always thought she tried to spoil me. Everybody used to look at me like I was soft or something. Truth is, I always liked to listen to my mom.

-Lil' Marcus

From The Beat: Sometimes, come down harder on the people they are the most worried about. Maybe when you were younger – and not yet getting into trouble, your mom was riding your brother hard because she was worried about him? As for being "soft".... "Hard" is just the shell we all wear to protect ourselves – like the outside of an egg that hasn't been boiled yet!

Thank You Beat

What's up Beat, it's Danny. Just want to tell you I get next month in camp and I'm so happy get out here and I'll be free and I want you to know thank you for every thing, especially the Book and notebook, it makes me write more. Thank you.

-Danny

From The Beat: You know the best way to thank us would be to keep writing, either for The Beat or just for yourself, as a way of helping yourself learn, grow, and stay strong. Peace and all our best wishes!

That Ain't The Spirit

I keep going to court every two weeks to keep hearing that they need more time to think. That ain't the spirit. It's keeping me down and impatient. I don't know what to do, how to release my anger, so my words seem rude.

Staff coming into work think they own my station
Taking their home anger out on us like they own their own administration.
And that's messed up 'cause they locking us up for nothin'.
I got kicked out of school for not reading on Frederick Douglass.
It's a thing about me that don't like reading about slavery
'Cause we locked up everyday like slaves in a cave
Not knowing how much time you got
And it goes by slow and oh fo' sure
I stay thinking about that ghost.
I want to do right and be legal when it's time to get out
And live a good life and raise my seed without hatred or doubts
On looking over my shoulder everywhere I am.
I just wanna be right in the mind
that I am the only one in my family that got a plan to succeed.
In this hell hole they call a world, with all the water and the trees you can't survive in the water if you don't know how to swim and you can't stay alive in a tree if you scared of heights. This is what I been thinking lately as I do my time. I need to get my shhh together before it's my time.

-Shady Bo

From The Beat: You are so full of potential – you could stay alive in a tree, you could swim, you could do anything you want. Hey you know what – you're so talented you could probably figure out how to swim in a tree. As for reading about slavery – when you read Frederick Douglass, you're not reading about slavery, you're reading about a man's genius and drive for freedom – which is exactly what you are looking for. Give FD a second chance, it's worth it.

When I Get Out

When I get out I am gon' get it rolling. I'm gon' get a job and ain't gon' come back here. I am gon' get money, cars, girls, and clothes. I'm gon' be eatin' ninja.

I gon' stay with gone, and won't no one knock me off the top I'm gon' be ninja gone respect it cause all am gone be about is my money and not the dumb shhh that gets a ninja back in here.

I'm gon' stay cool and stay on my P's and Q's, 'cause haters never want to see the next ninjas shine.

-Terrence

From The Beat: When you think about the "dumb shhh" that gets people locked up, how much does it have to do with whether or not you're earning that money legit? Do you have a way to get a legit job? Do you want one? Do you plan on going to school? Tell us more about how you are gonna "get it rolling".

Some Lovin'

Something that I always wanted from both my parent was love. I mean there a lot of things that I wanted from my parents but the main thing has to deal with self-emotions. But the cold part is I always wanted nothing but love, care, and attention. I never got what I wanted. Hopefully one day they will or my hope will come true. This real

- Ashley

From The Beat: You deserve this as does every child, plenty of lovin, care and attention by your parents! We're thinkin' good thoughts for you

Piece of My Mind

Surrounded by killers, drug dealers and thugs
Posted on the block always duckin' the slugs.
They be bustin' and bustin' but I'm still in the flesh.
Thank God I'm alive, still breathing, I'm blessed. No I won't confess.
There ain't no snitch in my breed.
I don't mess with these suckas, full of envy and greed.
Tryin' to knock my hustle is what I don't respect.
Speakin' on my name is what you gon' regret.
Drop bars, go hard when ya boy in the paint
Block stars hit hard then we makin' you faint
I need a positive mind but my vision is blurred
I can't see ahead but that don't mean that I'm scared
So fahget what you heard I'm on the block for life
Plus I'm married to the game 'cause the block my wife
Bandanas, grapes, gangstas and guns
I'm just tryin' to live lavish, accumulatin' the funds.

-Gumby

From The Beat: Your "wife" doesn't love you. She doesn't care about your health, your happiness. Hell, she's owned by the system anyway. All she wants to do is use you up and toss you out. Why don't you go out and find a new woman, who will respect you for your talent, support you in life, and keep you healthy?

You'll "Always Be My Baby"

The song that relate to me is "Always Be My Baby" by Mariah Carey. It relates to me because she talks about how even though her and her boyfriend broke up he still would be her baby, and for me, even though my boyfriend died he will always be my baby.

"We were as babe for a moment in time and as soon ever lasting that you will always be mine, but now you wanna be free so I let you fly 'cause I know in my heart baby our love will never die no".

"Yoou will always be a part of me I'm a part of you indefinitely boy don't you know you can't escape me ow darling 'cause you'll always be my baby.

The reason why I picked that song is because what I'm going through these days is based on my boyfriend's death. And everything she say in that song I can relate to.

- TeTe

From The Beat: We are so sorry, about the loss of your boyfriend. Our hearts go out to you and his family. May we ask, what's next for you on this journey called life?

"I'm Going Down" Without You

The song I can relate to right now is "I'm Going Down" by Mary J. Blige because I am going down with out my boyfriend.

"Time on my hand
Since you been
Away boy I
Can't help myself
No, no, no
And the sound
Of the rain
against my window
pole is slow, slow
drive me insane
oh baby I'm going
down cause you
not around baby
my whole world
upside down
sleep don't come
easy"

I'm going down because I miss him so much.

- Dawn

From The Beat: What will bring the two of you together after this period? Or, is it over and what have you learned from this episode?

My Life Tryin' To Get Money

It's so crazy how my life been, since I been seven till now. My father died when I was seven. He named me after him.

Now I'm getting cases tryin' to get money.
I'm missin' prayers daily on da streets tryin' to get these stacks.
Why that? 'Cause me and my brothers don't have gear like others.
My mom doin' kind of bad tryin' to raise me and my brothers.
I came from Oakland, the city where they say you don't want none.
Run up you might get shot, son.
I run with my gun with a clip on it.
Ridin' rims like I spit homes.
I'm sayin' now that I got locked up.
I can't do this stuff. Should I stop? If I don't will I get popped?
I go to church now, 'cause I did stop.
Thank God I went to juvy to let my album drop, what I mean by that.
I go to school and have a job when I get out 'cause of the hook up.
They are still gon' be in yo face sayin' let's rob someone today.
Say no, God's got my back, that's my strap.

-Lil' Marrill

From The Beat: "God's got my back – that's my strap." You could get rich putting that on a hat or the back of a t-shirt. This flow tells your story AND stomps like a drumbeat, we're looking for the sequel, when you write for The Beat Without to tell us how it's been.

The Greatest Thing Bout Me Is My Thinking

I think the greatest thing about me is my thinking. I think way differently from other people around me. That's what makes me so different from these other ninjas out here.

But sometimes my thinking gets all twisted up and wrong.

I know my thinking is the greatest thing about me, that's all I have to say.

-Doogie-baby

From The Beat: We've been knowing you, and your writing, for a long time, and it does seem you always carry yourself mature and on point. But then, if you're in here, yeah you must have had some twisted thinking at some point... so how do you personally know the difference between when you're thinking coo' and when you're thinking twisted? How are they different?

Get Real

Why do people lie about stuff that they know ain't true?
Why do people think it cool to fake.
Why do people lie and say they know people when they know it ain't it true.
Why are people fake.
Why are people lying, why don't they just keep it real.
You ain't gotta lie to kick it.
Man, get real.

-Lil' Ols

From The Beat: We know you didn't intend this as a poem, but as we were typing it, it started to feel like one, which is why we broke up the lines into a poem...it had that feeling of truth and music in it. But we don't have an answer – why are people so afraid to show who they really are? Any ideas? Maybe that could be "Get real" part four?

RIP Art

What's up with it Beat, it's Lil' Capy, just hella bored at camp. I'm writing about my dead homeboy lil' Art. Me and him grew up together. We used to put in work together all the time when he left me ...it really affected me. I just went crazy when he died.

But I ain't tripping --he waiting for me on the other side. RIP Art

-Lil' Capy

From The Beat: Ugh – so sorry to hear that you lost someone you loved. How did he die? Was it an accident, an illness, did he get claimed by the streets? How did you "go crazy"... what kind of effect did it have on your actions? We're here to print your memories and recollections of Art any day.

Expressin' My Feelings

The Beat is a program that helps me and other residents on expressin' our feelings, whether they are bad or good. I think it's a good thing for me tell what's on my mind because I don't let it out to no one else around here in camp.

I feel glad that they sent me to camp instead of a group home far away from my family, 'cause now I get to go home on the weekends and spend time with my love ones.

I'm not glad that I got locked up in the first place, I always think about ways I could have not got caught or what I should have do, like walk away or go to my patna's house.

But I learned my mistake and I am gonna make sure it ain't gonna happen again.

-Rr

For The Beat: Awesome. We hope you keep this piece so you remember it next time temptation hits, and we also hope you keep writing when you get out, because writing is a gift that keeps on giving!

I Remember

How Could You?
I remember when we use to stay up all night talk.
I remember when I use to hold you tight.
Damn, who would of thought it would of go down like.
I really loved you. I told you all my secrets...
Thought you loved me.
How you going to leave me for some ninja you just met?

-Lil' Ols

From The Beat: We know it doesn't help much to hear other people's words when you are in this kind of heart pain, but we do hope that a) you and your girl work it out b) you're feeling better c)that you believe us when we say, without a doubt, you WILL LOVE AGAIN.

My On My Mind Capsule

I would put a zip of grapes, two pills, some bo, some money, and pictures of my closest relatives and friends. I would probably throw all these things in my time capsule, because these are the items that are mainly on my mind. Maybe I would throw a lock in my time capsule that hasn't been locked yet, to represent my freedom in the long run.

-Sj

From The Beat: What type of pictures would you put in your capsule? Would you put portraits or pictures of places you have been together? What would you want the people in the future to know about your family and friends? Your idea about the lock is an extremely creative idea, would you like to place a letter in your capsule describing exactly what your metaphor means?

Check In

Man what it do? This thae oh-so-loved-but-oh-so hated Tone-Tone... Man I'm just checking in, even though I don't ever see none of my pieces in The Beat.... but I ain't worried about it, just doing what I do...And I'm gone keep on doing what I do some people who know me know what I do some people who know me know what I do some people don't but shhh if you don't know what I do I got it and go to school so I can be book smart and street smarts then I'll be unstoppable Holla.

-Tone-Tone

From The Beat: Young Tone, we are so sorry if there have been missing pieces for you in The Beat! Do remember, however, that when you're at camp, it takes over a month for your writing to show up, so be patient with us – because we promise we have never cut anything you wrote.

Damn

I'm in the hall
there ain't no words to explain
how I feel
Except for damn
I got called out of the unit
to go to court and when he (the judge) said
his orders all's I can say is damn
There's nothing I can do
to help my feelings
except to speak what comes to mind
when I get released alls that comes out
Is "damn"
so before I end this I might as well get it all out
Damn-damn-damn-damn
why I do that crime
now I get some time
Man, damn!

-KeKe

From The Beat: Now that "damn" is out of you, you can begin anew! What's the plan to not repeat this scenario?

So Solid

Beat what'sup this is Nitty coming out of Alameda it time to change. This jail shhh getting old an older by the day every day being told not to talk how to stand how long to sleep. Plus, I graduated and I still have to go to this High School that's teaching 7th grade math and expect me to do it and when. I ask for something harder they seem surprised like I'm mentally challenged.

Don't get the answer right they will start clapping an' hella shhh. I been incarcerated for the last 8 months and haven't learned a thing and schoolteachers curse you out quicker than a minor. That's just probably 'cause who I am.

I don't disrespect so I don't get disrespected.

When I get out I gone think twice about pulling that trigger I know you feeling what I'm saying. If you don't in my eyes you ain't real. You kind of sweet and sour to tell you the truth and nothing but the truth.

-Frank Nitty

From The Beat: Being underestimated, for your intelligence, your knowledge, your maturity, is a terrible thing. Have you gotten a chance to talk to your teacher and get that harder work? Or maybe a cool staff? If you want some extra reading, just let us know, and we'll hook you up!

This Song

Ne-yo let go- I know where past tense, it's been a minute since we were a couple, then walking an holding hands, kisses and I love yous doing what lovers do baby. But baby that was then, 'cause now we don't talk no more, you got a new girl and it shouldn't bother me but boy it's driving me crazy, and everybody say girl why don't you just leave it alone, uum but I don't think I can.

Chorus:

I stay up all night thinking bout you, and I knew it ain't right baby but I don't. I don't think that I,can let you go.

This song reminds me of me and my ex-boyfriend, we were together for two years. And we broke up for some stupid reason. I guess that we needed a break or something he had got with another female but he still had feelings for me.

I seen him not that long ago and told him how I felt an he told me that the girl that he just got with, he's really not feeling her and he want me back. We are trying to work thing out because I'm madly in love with this guy.

He's my first and last love and every time this song plays it reminds me of him because all my friends tell me to move on, but I just know I can't. I think about him all night and day. He's the only guy that takes my breath away. I'm in love and he loves me back and we would be together now that he let the other girl go.

- Juanaki

From The Beat: Can you trust him is the question? Can he trust you? Be honest with one another if you really want your relationship to work.

For My Daughter, RIP

Mamma always told me to be careful who
I loved and daddy always told me to make
sure he's right... I always had my eyes
on this one picticular guy so I decided
to write...

I'm sending you a letter and I
Enclosed it with a kiss and when I
Write him, he better get it on time.

People always say that I play myself
With you, they say that you don't even
Notice me (me, me,me,me, me) baby when
I get the nerve to come to you promise
Me you wont dis me.

I'm sending you a letter and I
enclosed it with a kiss and when I
write him he better get it on time.

This song reminds me of my daughter because about a year ago I gave birth to a beautiful baby girl named " Anena Stephany R." She didn't make it and basically I will be sending her a letter until I can be with her again. Every time I visit my daughter's grave I always sing this song

- Precious

From The Beat: We are so sorry for the loss of your child. If you do not mind us asking, what happened? Was there complications? What? Well, we are glad you are healthy and we hope you are working to overcome this horrific tragedy and begin a new!

Mary J Speaks To Me

I miss my fiancé. So my song is made by Mary J. Blige. "Baby we've been too strong for too long and I can't be without you baby and I'll be waitin' up until you get home because I can't sleep without you baby and to who ever loved you know just what I feel too hard to fake it nothing can't replace it call the radio if you just cant be without yourbaby.

She speaks to me because I'm in love and I miss my baby because he's my world just as well as my son. They both mean that much to me, but being in jail isn't helping them at all. I'm just away from them both. So that song helps me express how I feel about them because can't know body replace them.

-Neonchie

From The Beat: Well, you know the score and what must be done to reconnect with your man and your son. Get busy, ask for help, do whatever it takes!

I Am The Happy Emotion

If I was my biggest emotion it would be happy because most of the time that's what I am. If I was happy I would have a big smiley face and with big blue eyes that shine with the biggest smile in the world. Everybody would be happy when they see me. I would also be happy because when people I know is sad they become happy because I make them laugh. That's what emotion I would be.

-Raven

From The Beat: Good for you. Good energy is a great thing to have. Take care of you and do what's right and you'll have plenty of smiley days!

Tired And Sad

I so fed up with this places I don't know what to do no more. It's like I'm live in hell, but I'm not, it's the way I feel sometimes.

My mom barely even comes to see me anymore. I miss my family so much. Some nights I cry myself to sleep. I wish I was home. But I'm not, because I did something that hurt me and my family like sell drugs, robbery, assaulting and playing with guns. I wish I never did those things or I wouldn't be in here. I will be at home with my family.

-Dominique pooh

From The Beat: You see the wrong of your actions and you feel the pain from these poor choices, so now is the time to pick yourself up and take charge of your life! Get busy with a game plan that will work for you. Leave the drugs, robbing and assaulting in the past, and move on with learning from books, loving thy neighbor and family, seriously!

A Piece Of Me

If I were to make a time capsule,
And I had to pick what I wanted in
It I would probably put some money,
A letter that I have wrote, or school
Work that I have done. I would also want
To put something from today's date, something
That I love hella much. I would put some
piece of clothing that I wore today.

- Sharene

From The Beat: Why not put a piece of your heart in your time capsule. Who would you hope finds this capsule down the road? What would the time capsule say about you?

My Ol' Theme Song

I think the song from Mac Dre "There Is A Song For You" relates to my life because part of the song says I'm a cutthroat savage yo' trash might be cash. I also like the song simply because of the name of the song. I also like this song because if you ever listened to this song and really understand, you would know that's me and my nephew even liked that song. I wrote that song down word from word and used to sing it everyday. I used to call that my theme song. That relates to me.

- Beverly

From The Beat: What's your theme song now? Hopefully something a bit mellower, no?

Football Dreams

When I get out I'm going to get a job and I'm going to school everyday. One thing I hate about being in here 'cause I play football for Fremont and that's my dream to go to Cal one day and by me being in here is stopping me from reaching my dream.

I get good grades in everything. I just need to be free so I can achieve my goal in life 'cause I don't want my mom to be working at 60. I want my mom to be at home chilling or going shopping - just spending all my money.

-Hykeem

From The Beat: We hope you get what you get out soon, and make that dream of playing ball and getting to school. Have you talked with a college counselor about making up for the time you lose while you're in the hall?

Using Time in Jail

sleep
pushups
sit-ups
reading
daydreaming
working in Unit
talking in Vent
Listening to Music
Writing letters
Calling on phones
Going to school
Visiting
Shower

-Porkey

From The Beat: What's great about this list of yours is that it shows you've managed to fill a life behind walls with a lot of human comfort: talking, working, reading, learning. If you could live your life on the outside with many of these routines still in place, you would actually be able to have a terrific and productive life.

Longing For A Pink Pony

I remember something that I wanted my parents to get me, my number one thing was a pink pony. They wouldn't get it for me when I was 6 years old at my birthday party so I threw a tantrum. So they canceled my party. So that was something I always wanted and never got.

-Neonchie

From The Beat: Wouldn't that be something if you actually got a pink pony? Did you want a real pony or a toy pony?

I Lost Their Trust

Well, my mom gives me most of the stuff I want. But if I could get anything I wanted I'd want her to give me some patience. She gets too frustrated before I can explain myself. Or sometimes she don't want to listen when I try to explain things.

If I can get anything from my dad it would be having our relationship back.

I messed up by losing his trust and confidence in me. When I was staying wit' him I used to leave hella late at night, and he knew but never told me. Being here made him less confident in me, because I always told him no matter what he tells me I'll never come to jail, and he was right 'cause I've been sittin' in here for 45 days and I don't know when I'm getting' out.

I'm going to court on Friday and that's when I'll figure out what they're gonna to wit' me. Until then I let down both my parents, no matter what they say. I can make it up when I get out but until then I'll be here wastin' my time in life sittin' behind a cell for 19 hours a day.

-Ar

From The Beat: In some ways, if this experience taught you the lessons you write about here, lessons on trust and confidence and love for your parents, then maybe you haven't wasted your time here at all. Do you think that's possible? In the meantime, what could you do to make that time useful for your future?

Life Behind This Door

As I stand behind here watching life behind this door
Patiently I watch life come pass me slow
Anything my time to come
I can't help but smoke
Slip a little Hennessey and
Nod off on a sip of bo'
Nothing was never gave to me
With the exception of life
Life is what you make it to be
With the exception of rights
Most people can't relate to what I go through in life
So I strive to give y'all a little understand
And put the flo' on the mike
It's easy to do wrong
And it's hard to do right
Pray to God every day
That he could give me the might
To have the strength in the morning
I need vigiwall site
And at the end of the night as I rest my head
I'ma pray to God to get me out of this thing thang
I'm tired of this bed
I'm tired of this shhh

-H-twoOh-Cal

From The Beat: You are the only one who can get you out of this "thing thang." And if you do get out, it will be the hardest thing you ever do, and the most worthwhile. We don't just mean out of jail, we mean out of your real prison: That messed-up lifestyle. Re-read your own wonderful words, the way your pain comes through, and your hope. Now ask yourself "are these the words of a person who deserves jail and violence?" No. You have much more to offer the world, and yourself. Be a speaker, a preacher, a teacher. It's what you were born for!

Frustration

How can I live my life of crime
When ninjas be dropping dimes
From San Francisco to Oakland California
My ninjas is doin' time
To San Quentin to Folsom
My ninjas can't focus
Stranded behind bars, my ninjas is hopeless
Thirty-six years how he supposed to do that
Thirty-six years he ain't grown old enough to see that
I swear it's family first
But this family curse
Hella shhh happen, man this family hurt
Trials and tribulations I try hard to stay patience
Constantly motivated, but my faith it keeps fading
Contemplating on when he's coming home
It feels like never
How can you take my friend away from me
Wait, he was the one who created these enemies
So now I got to fight his battles
All alone while he up in the penitentiary
This ain't little Wayne, but man I miss my dog.

-Lil' Walt

From The Beat: You have taken the agony of losing Wayne to prison and turned it into a poem that would make a dead man cry – not just in grief but also in appreciation for the way love and loyalty can overcome – if only for a moment – the walls and locks that confine our loved ones behind bars.

"What If..."

Something I always wanted from my mom was for her to be there. She wasn't there for my early years because she was smoking. She soon got sober but I just wish she was there all my life. Just the point of her being there all my life might have changed the decisions I make now. I don't know.

But I always think "what if..." She was in my life in and out. I loved being with her. Right now she's out. She's in rehab now. Hopefully she'll recover.

-Da Boi

From The Beat: If she could only hear the talents bursting forth from her son, we think she'd probably be overwhelmed, both with sorry for what you've been through, and pride for the strengths you show... Crack is a truly horrifying drug, it destroys not just those sick with addiction, but also their families. What kinds of a relationship have you had in the times when she was able to stay clean? What is she like? Have you ever spoken frankly together about her struggles, and about how those struggles have made you feel growing up?

Good Things

Good things, is like having a good grandmother that cares.
Good things is like a cute stuffed bear.
Good things is like getting out of jail.
Good things is like a good cooked meal.
Good things is like sharin' the love.
Good things is like the good angels above.
Good things is like bein' alive.
Good things is getting' a big high five.
Good things is all right.

- Brittney

From The Beat: We too like the good things you write about and hopefully one day will enjoy all good things sooner than later.

When I Try To Do Good...

Every time I try to do good, it seems like something goes wrong. Like today, I tried going to school because I'm actually trying to turn my life around.

So, when I got there, everything was good. I spoke to the A-P and sec. We talked and planned how they could help me get back in school and what I could do to get the extra credits that I need in order to graduate.

Right when I was suppose to go talk to the principal. My favorite security guard told me to hold on, he said someone wanted to talk to me.

When I seen that it was a campus police, I looked puzzled. Before I said anything he was handcuffing me. Now I'm here. But I'm just going to wait for my court day...

I've been here seven time, so I can't complain.

Still there are the sweet/ sour memories of the outs..

- Goldy Locks

From The Beat: Hopefully you never see this piece published and you are now home enjoying freedom doing the right thing.

Untitled

Another chance is another way
the only way I had to choose was to be locked up until I'm 18 or to change me.
Even though I didn't know me I still had no chance to find me.
It's hard when you don't get that love from your mom.
It's hard when you try to get close and all she does is push you away.
But all you do is give her another chance.
They say you have to forgive and forget. But all I do is forgive her.
I'm not knocking her for the way she is. Her illness is not to blame.
Even though she don't take her medicine people can change.
She would say thing to put me down and make me runaway.
But everyday I pray for my mom.
I always wanted to be a mama's girl.
I never got told to treat your body like a pearl.
My mom always denied me.
She never showed me she loved me.
It took me to be in a cell and to go to jail.
For her to give me some attention but I learned that if there's a way there's a will.
I chose to go down the right road
the left road was the wrong road that I choose not to go.

- Ashley

From The Beat: We like your outlook, although it must be hard, when all you want is some attention and love from your mother. Well ,we hope today things are a bit better between the two of you and your mother is taking better care of her self.

Time Capsule for a Peaceful Future

If I was making a time capsule I would put in it pictures of me when I was a baby up until now. I would put my birth certificate and where I was born at so people would know who I am and how old I am, I would put a picture about where I'm from so they would know how I came up and where I'm from.

I would put some money in and a video from a camcorder so people in the future would know how we lived back then (today). I would put pictures of all my dead homies cause hopefully by then people and violence would stop.

-Joseph

From The Beat: Wouldn't that be amazing, if the people from the future had left our violent ways behind, had found a way to live in peace, to live together without the drama and flying bullets? Do you mean the street violence, do you mean the wars going on in the world? Do you mean both?

My Tough Love Wall

If these walls could talk
They would say, "dang I've
Seen you before, why you
Writing on me?"
They might even say, "how does it
Feel to look at me
All day and night?
Are you done doing your
Crimes or do you like
Watching me all
Damn day? Damn
I'm getting tired of
Looking at u all damn
Day u hella annoying!
Damn I'm all white don't
You feel like you are in
A psyche ward or something
Well lights out I'm
Down...

- Lil' Walker

From The Beat: Listen to you and that wall, time to leave this facility and have a good life! Is it possible?

Don't Need No Title

My mind been racing at 1,000 miles per hour. My thoughts run faster then a Formula One car and the fuel it runs off is pain and emotions that I can't express if I wanted to.

I smoke purp to release the tension and bo' to put me to sleep so I won't be up all night. I don't snort coke but I understand why. I don't pop pills either 'cause I'm gonna mess around, pop me a ninja too. But I ain't gonna mess with no more drugs.

-Marley

From The Beat: You say you can't express your pain, but you just did, with a metaphor so powerful it almost roars up off the page. You don't need drugs when you have a talent like this... your own passion will keep you off the drugs that slow you down and blunt your vision. Keep your eyes wide open and you'll find your own way out. Peace.

Stay True to Myself

What's up with it? I'm in this max unit livin' this weak ass hall life man. You ninjas know how this shhh be. They got the kid again, but I ain't trippin' though. They can't hold a ninja down for too long.

So I'm just about to get this over with, man this ain't cool.

When I was out I was sayin' I wasn't going to come back in here.

But you know shhh happens. I'm gon' be back out soon, so I could do my thang. I got to do cool so I could stop comin' here, this shhh crazy.

I got to stay true to myself 'cause ninjas ain't cool, like my brother been tellin' me ninjas be hollarin' that solid shhh but ain't solid so fuck all these ninjas. When ninjas be out, ninjas be wantin' to mess with you but when you ain't around or in jail ninjas be speakin' on you. That's how ninjas get cooked. So I'm just gone do my thang.

-Roland

From The Beat: What you say is so true. One thing about criminal living, both in and out of the hall, is that it brings out the worst in people. It makes them afraid, afraid of getting shot, afraid of getting beat, afraid of getting jail time. It also makes them greedy. Greed + Fear + Stress brings out the fake in all of us. Is it even possible for a person to be true to himself if he's basing his life on shady living? When you get out, what kinds of steps will you be taking to make a life that helps you be true to the best in yourself?

What My Dreams Tell Me

They tell me to better stay out of here, get good grades, stay out of trouble. But I just can't do it 'cause of what I been through and what I know: Get money, spit game, talk shhh whoop ninjas who want it, don't snitch, keep my mouth shut.

And I know my mom is sad, depressed 'cause of what I been doing but when I get out I'm follow my dreams.

-Lil' Dauce

From The Beat: You put it so well – what you've done so far is what you know. But the great thing about human nature is that we were built to learn new things and new skills, so we have more options. In order for you to fulfill your dreams, you will need to open up to new knowledge: how to study, how to work for that long term paycheck instead of that overnight wad of cash, how to sacrifice short term fun, how to say no to pressure.... Can you do that?

Why Show Love?

Every time I wake up in the morning go to school doin' what I got to do, never get kicked out of school and never got no write ups since I been in here. But one day I asked one of the staff could I get a phone call today, and they said "yeah wait till later. Remind me too." I be like "alright." But when I do they be like "too late."

When I remind them early. Then when I ask them the next day, ask them again, but they always tell me the same stuff over and over.

How I feel is why show them love if they don't show me love? Some days I feel like going bad on them but at the same time I'm thinking about it, it's not a big deal so I just took it all on my push ups and readings.

-Pp

From The Beat: The messed up part of incarceration is the way other people control every little detail of your life. You can't control that, but what you CAN control is how you deal with it. That's why this piece right here is a story of triumph, because like you say, you make the decision not to go bad, not to give them another reason to take away from whatever freedom you have left. Congratulations, you're doing the very best you can with this situation, and watching your own back! Of everything you've read so far, what have you liked the most?

The people that I miss and love

I realy miss my baby daddy.
Thinking damn is he cheating on me?
What is he doing behind my back?
Sometimes you cant trust your boyfriends or baby daddys.
I'm just thinking about is he takin' care of my son.
Is my son going to school.
Is he ok.
It's hard being a single parent
because when you go to school and your kids go to school it's kind of weird
there is no more just thinking about you and what time you get out.
You also have to think about your baby girl or boy.
I know my baby daddy isn't a single parent because he has my mother to help.
My son lives with me but my baby daddy does too.
I'm not helping him or my son being in jail.
That's why I love my mommie because she has my back no matter what.
If I'm wrong or right she still has my back.
Don't worry mommie will be out soon
well be a big happy family again.

- Neonchie

From The Beat: You say you are a single parent, but it sounds to us like you have plenty of support, yet you have trust issues with your baby's father, what to do is the question, but first things first, take care of this situation and get out of jail and be present and loving to your child that you brought into this world!

Hard Times

It's hard times ninja
When it's hard times
When it's times ninjas
Give me hard times
When it's hard times
Ninjas start committin'
CRIMES
Young ninjas on da grind
Committin' hella crimes
Found myself doin' time
The system don't give a ...
Giving ninjas hella time
They hella RACIST
Still think it's slavery time
Meanwhile on the outs
Parents having hard times
Workin' 9 to 5's
Makin' a nickel and a dime
Ninjas in the streets
Everyday steadily dyin'
Bustin' glocks and chops
Doin' black on black crimes
Girls on the block
Walkin' the track sniffin' them lines
While the white man's laughin'
Watchin' us have hard times.

-Sonic

From The Beat: It's hard times – it's like a slavery that people voulenteer for. By committing crimes they put themselves in the system, and as you already know, the system is hungry. But you're better than that, you can get out, if you take advantage of the different programs out there to help a smart motivated young person life himself up and out of it. Are you ready to do that, to rise above these hard times and help end them?

Think Twice

What's happenin' Beat ... this is Cal Berkeley writing from Max.

No contact visit, just mo' room time. All I see is blue doors, white walls and detainees. But all Cal got to say is Life is whatch you make it to be!

I'm dreaming forever,
Realizing life is in the present
Although life it be hectic
Still struggling to accept it
Tryna go straight to the top
Best believe I'm a make it
Amazing , outstanding, best believe I'm the greatest
Before my time it was hectic
Rich white folks be testin' us
Not tryna sound racist
Because I got love for the next race and it's ridiculous
My lyrics even sound suspicious
Can't walk a mile without being targeted
Them larks be lookin' harshly
The streets they be a part of me
So think twice as you judging me
I'm loving when you hate on me
Motivation is what I'm hearin' see,
Sometimes patient but I'm simply
Coming up
I been in this world for 15 years
Lord please don't take me now I ain't done enough

-H-TwoOh-Cal

From The Beat: If you love it when you get hated on, will you hate it when we tell you how much we love this flow? How the rhymes are like drumbeats on a march towards freedom? We hear the prayer at the end and feel you. You have so much to do: Go to school, learn from great poets, read more, take a boat down a jungle river, fall in love in a foreign country, and finally, share your knowledge and experiences with the next generation. We hope all these things come true/that's the Beat's first prayer for you.

Toy for Christmas

Well when I was a little,
I wanted my mom to give me a toy for Christmas
And she didn't because she didn't have money,
But she did end up getting it for me

-Ligro

From The Beat: That's love – just think of how much she wanted to get something for her little boy, and she came up with the money anyway. The toy must have been great, but it's the love that is the real gift!

We Don't Die

Original G black clothes and bangers, bullet shells in chambers

The tane less but we brainless and just think I'm bout to get one more body then be famous. Shhh I guess I ain't it.

You can play it how you want but I'm gone stay this gangsta to the day I lay with the worms. I rock when baby skin say. I got rock for deda-man a long time ago.

-Lil' Dirt

From The Beat: We know you have a lot of love for your hood, but we are concerned about you and the choices you make, this life you lead is only going to get harder and uglier.

Music in my Life

That Alicia Keys song "Everything Going to be Alright," even though she be talking about a relationship. But I think it's more of an inspiration to let ninjas know everything gonna be cool...that's what I think.

I don't like listening to Lil Wayne, no more but that Duffle Bag Boy song 'cause in his chorus he be talkin' about he ain't goin out to no ninja and that's how I be feeling. I ain't going out, haven't ran, and ain't gonna run from here ninja. Haven't and won't now.

Nowadays I be listening to old school songs because they be putting 102.9 on every morning. So I'm used to old school. Now a lil' ninja on that jazz shhh too. Because it just be talking about some real shhh, love and all that and sometimes I be freestylin' in da room to the jazz... How the instruments be replacing the person who singin' with the instrument.

-Kevin

From The Beat: The way you write about music, and what it means to you, is on a whole other level. Yeah – a great saxophone player or trumpet player can make you feel sadness, and joy, and all the emotions that a singer does – and now you tell us you're freestyling to it?

J- Walkers

A lot of people say that they are (J) walkers which means they mostly wear Jordans. I'm one of those people. I love Jordans so that's all my mom buys me and my grandma buys me, Nikes.

One day my mom bought me some "Thirteens" that I couldn't fit me, but I couldn't help but to wear them because I never seen anyone with them. Instead of hurting my feet I let my cousin wear them and stretch them out, and it worked, because now I could fit in them. The funny thing about it is that my mom got mad at me and cut them up.

- Tesharra

From The Beat: Your mom cut up your shoes??? Why? Also why Nikes and not Adidas or Pumas?

I'm Tired...

I'm tired of this shhh, 'cause all we do is eat, shhh, sleep. Then lights go out and we got to go to school and LME, no where to go. Sometimes I get so stressed out and can't sit in one place. I'm tired of this food that we have to eat, sometimes no salt or pepper, nowhere to go.

-Lil' Dauce

From The Beat: No salt or pepper! That's terrible! It's also a perfect metaphor for life on lockdown: The basics are fair, but without the spice of life, and everything that gives life it's flavor!

Life

Life is what I make it
Love and my heart, girl
Please take it, a person like me you will never find or see
Stop!
Wait let me breathe
You my eyes that make me see
Lights camera actions, cheese!

-J-Money

From The Beat: Lights, camera, action, cheese! That's the way we'll remember you – smiling with those big old shining teeth.

Dear Beat

What's up Beat, how you been? Me, I've been holding it down in this jail. I'm doing my best and I'm just waiting to get out of here.

Today I've been here for 100 days. I hate being here, but what do you expect for robbing people's houses? I don't have any else to say but I should be out of here sometime in December. So until next week, I'm gone to my room.

-Convict

From The Beat: Stay up! We hope that you will keep writing us and that the time will fly by before December. We anticipate good things from you too!

A Piece Of Me

If I put a time capsule underground, I would put many things inside of it like pictures of cars, Nintendo system, JET magazine, Harry Potter book and Dr. Pepper soda cans.

-DeAndre

From The Beat: Yes indeed we get a taste of what you like, thanks!

True Love

Have you ever received true love from someone? That's what I am talking about this week. I'm gonna talk about true love because not a lot of people receive or give true love to somebody.

I had received true love from my family, especially my mom, she always taught me how to make good decisions but it kinda flipped around and that's why I'm in here, I didn't listen to my mom words.

I ended up here, in jail, I received true love from them (my family) because they came to visit me that shows that they care about you. I wanna thank them for all the love they have given me. I hope I get out and give them the love they showed me. Thanks for coming.

-Marco

From The Beat: WE know you'll get out, so tell us how you are going to show your family, especially your mom, true love?

My Book

I would write a book about myself, and what I did good for my family and friends.

-Ligro

From The Beat: That's a book we'd be happy to read. Even better, we'd be happy to print in The Beat.

It's Not a Game

This life I am living is not a game
Made a couple mamas cry,
So a couple people want to splat my brain
I think to myself will I remain
But I messed up by choosing to ride in the fast lane
But I am in the streets trying to shine
But people get shot for being in the wrong place at the wrong time Everything I became I wasn't really forced to be
It was natural to live life like a young G
But look at me I am in jail living like a slave
Because of my pride and trying to be brave
I am lucky to say my body hasn't found death on a crime scene
Because I be plotting on people to get the green
Just like Mike Meyers be trick or treating on Halloween
I am lucky to say I found a talent that I am good at
Because I was tired of being with people who don't need ski masks
to bust caps
That's how it is in Oakland, the home of the Raiders
Where these youngstas be busting K-ters
(Rest in Paradise Carlos F. Perez & Tomas Smith)

-Baby Q

From The Beat: You're going to think we're crazy, but we think on some deep level, you were more of a slave out there than in here. Out there you were living against your nature – violent, self-destructive, hurting your loved ones and enemies in different ways. But since you've been locked up, you've also started searching your soul, asking yourself the hard questions, reflecting on what kind of man you want to become. We wish you could also have physical freedom to go with the mental freedom you are achieving, but in the meantime, hold on to your gift of thought and poetry... let it keep you mind out of slavery.

Fopr My Mom

This is something I want for my mother, all the love, care, gentle ways, hope, and tears my mother had shed.

I wish my father showed the same feelings toward my mother. I wish he even have a flick of light in his heart for our torn up family. While I'm away, my mom needs someone to provide for her take care and support . It's hard for me to stay in jail knowing that my mom is standing on the other side of the mirror and my father is on the opposite side.

-Zuy

From The Beat: Sounds rough. Best to you in making better choices and being there for your loving and needy mother.

What I Wanted

Something I always wanted but never got from my parents was a 3 wheeler and I always get mad at my mom and I just scream at her then I just leave the house and come back home late and she just screams at me and I just ignore her and I just go to sleep.

I remember I wanted a grill and my mama didn't buy me one and I just get mad at her.

-Ernesto

From The Beat: Did you ever get what you wanted? How did you get it? Why would you be mad at your mom for not buying you a grill?

" I Bleed Concrete" Lil' Wayne

Streets make the hustle
Hustling make the world go round
The keys, ounces, and pounds is made
Made from hustling
See how shhh come back round
For ya
Ya gotta cop it chop it and cook it
See how shhh come back for ya
Now put a cake in the oven and it bubble
Now you could knock on my door but you can knock da hustle
Butta
It's like a game of 21 and I got 19 in my J buttas
Put mo D on me lil' weezy we gon eat that's how it is
Got insurance on the flo maine 'cause I'm that positive
And I'm shaggy in swaggy van
Me and my squad us that patty waggy Taliban
And you know I got the mag on that
45 mag wit' the flash on day
who want it.

Now I'ma ride 'cause I got ridin' in my bloodline and I'm gonna shine 'cause I got shinin' in my bloodline, I get that dough 'cause I got hustling in my blood line I bleed concrete.

-Deshon

From The Beat: If this is the flow that best represents you, we hate to say it but is sounds like your days in the free world are numbered. We wish you would have told us more, yet this is what you give and we can only say, we're glad you are locked up if this is truly who you are.

Longing For A Pocket Bike

Something I have always wanted from my parents, but that I never got is a pocket bike. A pocket bike is a mini motorcycle that goes 40 miles per hour. I wanted it since I was 11 years old. But I'm not the age that you have to be to get one. The day that I ever get one, I will ride it for hours and do wheelies on it.

-DeAndre

From The Beat: We hope that when you are the right age, and you saved enough to buy the motorcycle, you'll share that happy moment with friends and family.

Love

My love is about my life,
I made a stupid choice and now I have to serve five months now
for a dumb choice that I made
now I can't get out and save my lil bra from not coming in here
this ain't no place for nobody.
This aint no good environment for anyone.
I just want another chance and I can change my life
but see I never get it
peace I'll be save out there.

-Baby Joker

From The Beat: Well, you can send this piece to your bra, and you can work really hard now to make your life better when you return home, 'cause you are going home youngster!

Making Better Choices

I don't know what to write about so I'ma just write about myself and when I got my next court I already been here for a month and already trippin' about when I'm about to leave. My next court date is on the 26th and by then I'm already going get close to doing two months, but to be real it ain't nothing, doing time you gotta be wiser about making your choices the next time but anyways though, I hope my next court goes well for me and hope I get out soon. When I get out I'm gonna make a lot better choices and do well at school.

-Safi

From The Beat: What type of better choices will you make? What must you avoid? What must you do well at?

A Bad Choice

I want to get out of here so I can go to my family and be free.
When I get out I'm gonna chill with my partners for a minute,
spend sometime with mom,
I'm gonna talk about not coming back to jail anymore.
This is my first and last time.
I've been here a month and two weeks.
I'm in here for burglary. It was a bad choice. I hurt myself by this choice.

-Marjon

From The Beat: Good luck on making better choices!

About My Son!

My son its very big
I don't know why I love him though
He's tall
he's only 8 months
he gots my eyes my hands my nose
his eyes are green and kinda grey
his hands are big like mine
but he got his mom's hair
my son got mostly everything of her
but he just got my eyes my hands my nose
well yea every time I go to the mall or somewhere with my baby mamma
every body be like your son look just like your baby mamma
then they look at me and tell me he got your eyes
my baby mamma get jealous and she be like lets go and I be like ok lets go and we leave I love them both.

-G Man

From The Beat: You love him and will forever love him because he is your boy, your seed, your blood. Take care of yourself so you can be there for him, forever!

A Negative Time Capsule

If I had a time capsule, I'd put a blunt in it to represent all the times I have ever felt stressed. I'd put my Cortez's in it for all the times I've been running around and all the gangbanging that I ever did. I put my rosary (beads) in it to show that God was always there for me and he never gave up on me. I'd put a gun in there to show how the bay gets down. I'd put Mistah Fab's CD album "Baydestrian" to let every one know how the bay did it in 2007. There are other things I'd put in there but, by now, there's not enough room.

-Convict

From The Beat: Does the gun really represent the Bay? It is depressing that a weapon that causes death and suffering would be the symbol for how people live their lives in the Bay. This time capsule sounds like the old you, or should we ask who are you really? And what do you see your life like when you return home?

I Thought I Knew That Ninja

I thought I knew that ninja but I didn't.
I thought that ninja had my back but he didn't.
I thought we was family but we wasn't
I thought that ninja would get down for me but he didn't
I thought ninja was solid but he wasn't.
I thought I could count on family to keep it solid when I'm gone
but 'til then I'm gonna keep it lit and keep my head up.
RIP Cell

- Lil' Damani

From The Beat: Tough lesson is what we read, given you obviously felt like someone didn't watch your back. So, what next? Can you move on and leave your old ways? This lifestyle brigns great sadness and stress, don't you agree?

They Really Don't Understand!

Man my moms really don't understand.
She always wanted me to be a good school kid but that wasn't me
I was a gangsta in my heart and my mind but she never understood. All I grew up around was gangstas, thugs, and drug dealers
so eventually it rubbed off on me
all my uncles and cousins were gangstas and thugs
so eventually they brought it out in me
but moms still didn't understand me
'till I ended up in here
got a gun and some coke.
Now she understands me and that's all I ever wanted
Was her to understand me.

-It's All Bad

From The Beat: Sounds like she can't change you, so she has accepted your poor tragic choice of living the incarcerated thug life. Hope you wake up one day before it's too late.

The Time To Man Up

My time is now
to man up
my family depending on me
I'm not gon' let them down
I been doing that all the time
make sure that I don't mess this up
I don't want to go to prison.
Been in here for 2 months and some days
I'm tired of Juvenile Hall
I'm tired of all this talking I'm hearing.

-Lil' Damani

From The Beat: Good, glad to hear you are ready and able to better your life! Tell us how you gonna do it!

I Don't Want No Problems

A ninja ain't getting no younger
I'm hungry for bread
they got me under surveillance
you messing with the careless for wearless

I swear that girl that you riding with
Look so good that I'm trying to make
Her mine, I probably get her
'cause today I'm a dress fly as
Fitter we on a whole other level

-Lil' Dirt

From The Beat: Hey, we hate to cut your pieces, but we truly need to sit down and go over your work. One we are not going to put pieces in this paper that incriminate you or allow you to talk mess about how great you and yours are. You have potential to tell your story, you simply need some direction when it comes to writing your story.

Buy Me A Brother!

Something you always wanted from my parents. When I was born, I had older sisters. It was three of them. Then I got tired of my sisters and asked my mom to buy a son and don't buy no more daughters. I was only four years old.

-Erin

From The Beat: Did you ever get that brother?

More Attention

Something I wanted was my mom attention, but never got it. My brother got everything love, games, attention, and money and that's what I wanted but never got it and all I wanted was love and attention but never got it and when I needed something I never got it so I will get mad and storm off.

-Baby Joker

From The Beat: Why do you suppose your brother got more than you? Any thoughts?

Goodbye

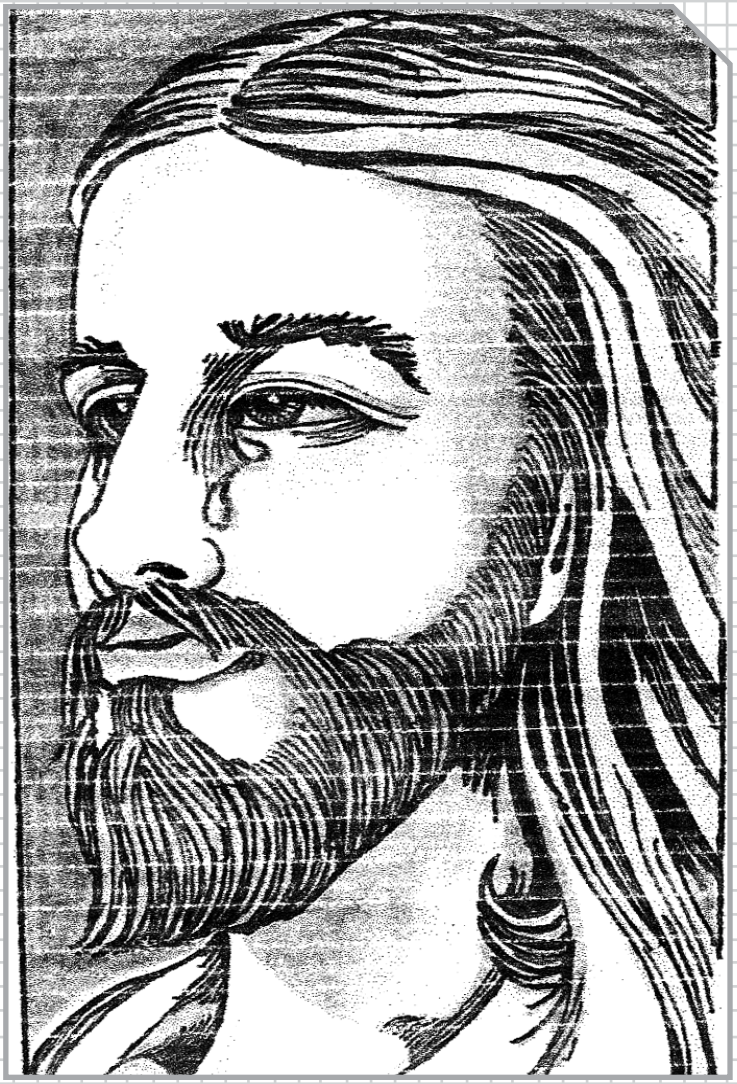
Greetings and salutations. Allow me to fully extend my utmost and always highest of love and respect to The Beat Within staff. I hope this letter reaches you all in good hands and the best of health and a state of clarity. With that stated, I will respectfully commence to the biz....

What's good Beat? Sorry to say, but this will be the last time you'll be hearing from me for awhile because I'm being transferred to the county jail. After serving one year and seven months here at Santa Cruz County Juvenile Facility, I'm finally moving on to something new! While I'm at County, I'll still be going to court, but my next court date will be my last – because it will be my sentencing. At the moment I'm facing 8 to 15 years with an indeterminate life sentence. My public defender is trying to convince the judge to give me a straight 10 years with a strike, and waive my right to appeal. This stuff is very stressful, but I try to maintain as best I can. I know I'll be headed out to one of the pintas within a couple of months, so once I get established, I'll try to drop a letter to The Beat.

I just want to say thanks to Dennis Morton who does The Beat workshops 'cause he's help me get through some difficult stuff and always gave me good advice. I also want to say thanks to the solid homies here in the hall who always stuck by my side no matter what the circumstances were. Well Beat, my time is up. I will now excuse myself from this place the same way I came in....

-Jesse

From The Beat: Jesse, we will miss you. We will never forget your detailed six part series on what it was like to spend a day in court. Please keep working on your writing. You improved and improved as time ticked on. We look forward to hearing from you, once you are settled. Use your time wisely. Read and read and read. Educate yourself while you're in there.



Taking It Easy

Well Beat, I'm choosing to free write. I'm taking things easy. Don't get me wrong – things still go down, but for now I'm taking things easy for a couple of reasons. The first is my son. The second is so I don't catch more time in here. I can't wait to get out. Five more months, that's it.

-Jordan

From The Beat: Your son will be seven months old when you get out. Are you reading books about how to be a good dad? Remember, we told you we'd try to get one for you, if you asked us to.

First Time

What's up Beat? This is the first time I've been in the hall. I don't like it here. It's really boring. I'm barely getting used to this system. It sucks being locked up. You can't see your family, go with your girlfriend, or do anything. I don't like being told what to do, but since I'm in here, I have to listen, or else I get more time. I want to see all those things I mentioned. I'm just trying to stay out of trouble so I can get out as soon as possible.

-Robert

From The Beat: Robert, you're not supposed to like it in the hall. And your reaction is a healthy one. Hopefully, you will have learned something by the time the doors open and you return to your family. In the meantime – no excuse for being bored. Plenty of terrific books at the hall. Read a few and write to us about them. Nothing like a good book to make time speed up.

Tired Of Being Here

What's up Beat? There were some pretty good topics today, but I don't know what to write about them, so I'll do this free write. I want to say that I'm doing good but that I'm freaking tired of being here, of being locked up. I really want to get out. And I want to ask that you please post this piece because it's been awhile since my pieces have been in The Beat.

-Buddha

From The Beat: Here's the deal Buddha: back in the days when you wrote under your real name, you wrote a poem for us that was so good we showed it to just about everybody we know. We even got it published in the local weekly arts and entertainment paper. And it was seen by many, many people – including one of the best poets in the country. She told us that in her opinion, yours was a "perfect poem". It doesn't get any better than that. So, in a way, you made it tougher on yourself, because now we know, and lots of people know, that you can produce some top notch writing when you put your noggin to it. So, what we ask of you is that you feed us some real stuff. We'll always print 'real stuff'. And we know that you can write it. So step up Mr. Buddha. We don't expect a "perfect poem" every time. But we do expect something that you've put your heart and mind into. Do we have a deal?

Fouts Springs

I'm off to Fouts Springs soon. I plan on doing good so I can get out early and be with my girl. I can't say how I will change my life around, but I plan on something in my life changing. I hope this place can help me.

-Kevin

From The Beat: We hope so, too. But wherever you are, it's you who has to do the changing, you who has to focus and work hard at becoming the person you'd like to become. We have come to know you quite well. We think that some hard work to go along with your good intentions will turn your sadness into a well earned satisfaction. We want you to do well Kevin. Write to us, please, and let us know how it goes.

Tryin To Do This Time!

Man, I got a lot on my plate right now. I been down for 108 days and I got to turn around and do another year somewhere else. I am not feelin' that they finna make me sit down for year. I am finna miss out on a lot things this year. My 18th b-day, my senior year, a few holidays, and hella money. But what happens is what happens, so I just got to ride this time out and get back to my life.

-Knowledge

From The Beat: Do you foresee any changes when you get back to your life? You can never get back time that is lost, but you can do all in your power to make sure that you don't lose any more. Are you up to it?

Changing The Game

I am going to change the game by pimping the system. My meaning is to follow the white people rules and do my program so I can show myself and my mom I can do it so I can get off probation or move to Vallejo so I can get off probation. That's my definition of cheating the system.

-Za-Fe

From The Beat: If you do the things you're supposed to do, and stop doing the things you're not supposed to do, you will cheat the system, but you will also benefit yourself. What's the hardest thing about following "the white people rules"?

Rap For My Girl

Yo' what's good wit' da Beat? This ya boy Bizz from unit 5. I wrote this rap for ma girl Shavon who's on the outs waiting for me. I love you baby. A'ight here we go...

Chorus:
You know I'm comin home tonight baby stop trippin'
I gotta do ma thug thing, I'm on da block flippin'
Tryin' stack a mill, I just need a little time mami
Give a ninja space see I'm focused on the grind mami

Verse 1:
Lil' ma, you know you feel this lil' ninja on some big shhh
But me and you could neva lose 'cause we always winnin'
But please don't be offended when I'm chillin'
You know I'm watchin'
Been through many obstacles so you know I got ma boo
12 o'clock I'm stoppin' through
And we could do the freak nasty swallow a ninja thizzin'
Then I'm smashin'
Great sex that we havin'
You know and catchin' feelings be bad
Ready ta kill each other 'cause anotha
Don't wanna see us wit' each other
Damn, you light skinned like Beyonce, more hair like Ashanti
Mami, it yo' body, yo' thighs. they bidness a ninja namin' long lettas
I'm 'bout whatever fo' you girl
You know it's me and you fo'ever
Yo' body baby make you wanna have ma baby
Yo' body baby
I bet you wouldn't understand
It made me grow up from a boy to a man.
Repeat Chorus

-Bizz

From The Beat: So, what is your definition of being a man? Have such a fine girl on the outs while you put something ahead of her (you must have since you're here and she's there) doesn't give us a sense of your maturity. If being with her is so fine, what changes do you anticipate making in your life when you get out of here so that you won't have to write sad raps about what you're missing because you won't be missing it!

Take It How It Is

Something you always wanted from parents but never got... I tried to get everything I wanted from my parents and if I couldn't get it, I couldn't get it... Take it how it is. Also, when you earn your own money, you could get it on your own.

-Xavier

From The Beat: Well, our question was what you wanted but didn't get from your parents. That question you failed to answer. If you didn't get it, you didn't get it... but what was "it"?

Gangstas Need Love

It's sad how this girl I'm feeling hard
Ain't tryna be with me since I'm a thug
Gangstas need love too
All I ever wanted was to be that special one
Why won't you give me a chance?
Is it my baggy clothes, my gold chain or the way I talk?
I'm a highly organized gangsta. a gentlemen with respect
A gangsta that needs love
You know I'm feeling you
And we were one back then
But now since I'm down
You ain't tryna be with me
Give me some love
Gangstas need love too...

-Big Uso

From The Beat: Yes, everybody needs love. But it seems like you love being a gangster more than you love her, since you know why she won't get with you. You're choosing the thug life over her, so what are you complaining about?

A Smoother Criminal

Wha's up with da Beat? Man, dis be yo' boy CB. I been here for about two months. About to go to the Ranch. They really playin' me the most. I'm in here for a weak-ass robbery case, but I ain't trippin. I'ma get dis shot done and smoke like 80 chops when I get out, and I'ma do my crimes way more smoother.

-Chris

From The Beat: Well, if you do your crime "way more smoother," we hope you get to do your time way more smoother, too (because it's either insanity or childishness to think you can do what got you here without facing the same consequences). What's a "weak-ass robbery case"? Robbing is against the law, and these are the fruits of breaking the law. Plus, if you were the victim of this robbery, we doubt if you would find it "weak-ass"...

I'm Headin' Off To Colorado...

Feel me folks, I'm off to,
Colorado Springs, 'bout to live,
With my big sis and aunt,
Feel me I'm fint to do me,
And keep my mind steady,
So I can get off probation,
And be me in a new state,
Feel me. I'm fint to rep San Francisco
And show what is all about
But in a good and positive way
As well as crazy and unique,
Feel me I'm fin to be out,
And make Colorado poppin',
I'm out, one love

-Halo

From The Beat: We hope you are able to follow through on your commitment to do good and get off probation. As you know, words are not enough unless they are matched with deeds. Good luck.

My Other Half

What's good wit' it, Beat? Me, just chillin' like a villain. Well, my brother just left to Samoa. He left for a year. That's going to be the longest time we had spent away from each other, and I definitely don't feel right. I'ma be gon too for a year at the ranch.

He like my right hand, backbone, and my heart. I love him to death, and ain't nothin' gon change. So when we touch down, we gon do it big and stack mo' cheese than a factory.

A'ight then, I'm out..

-Yung Chink

From The Beat: We hope that after a year passes, both of you will have matured enough to stay out of places like this. Stacking your cheese may be a worthy goal, but it all depends on how you plan to get it. You know where illegal activity leads, so why not put that part of your life behind you so that you and your brother can keep each other safe and free.

Cool

If I was my biggest emotion I would be cool because I'm da coolest ninja from around my way. So yeah, dat's how I describe myself as an emotion.

-J-R

From The Beat: We almost decided not to publish this because it says so little. What does it mean to be "cool"? There is no way you can write a decent Beat piece in just two sentences. (We didn't publish your second piece because it says even less than this one!)

You Know What It Is

What it do Beat? Dis ya boi Peanut. I say I pick dis song 'cause dese ninjas think they be on ma line. but dey know it ain't happenin' 'cause can't nobody fenta get on ma line what dey sniffin'. But when ninjas come up to me like on some otha shhh, all I tell 'em is, "Boi, you know what it is 'cause when cats here nut or peanut, dey already know what it is. Holla.

-T.I.

From The Beat: Just a word of warning... This piece is not really worth publishing. It teaches nothing. It tells us nothing about you, your life, the world... really nothing at all. The warning is this: Next time we won't publish such a piece unless it has something worth publishing!

Wish I Knew My Father Better

Something I want from a parent, specifically my dad, is to know him more, because as I grew up he was always in jail or out tha country and we never really talked about anything. He was very distant and cold. He is currently in jail doin' time, so I hope that we both get out soon and try to make a better relationship. Al Rato

-Tito

From The Beat: We hope you both get out soon and get to build a relationship, too. Because of the way your father related to you when you were growing up, will you be a different kind of father when the time comes?

Locked Up On A Plane

On October 1, 2007, I was getting' off a plane coming from Philadelphia. I arrived in San Francisco at 3:45 p.m. When my flight landed, I got up to retrieve my bags…

-Steven

From The Beat: We can tell that you didn't finish this piece, and that's too bad because we really want to know so much more, even from the little bit you wrote. (And why were you only able to write this little bit — about two and half sentences — when we give you almost a full hour to write?) Some of the things we'd like to know are: What were you doing in Philadelphia? Did you have things in your bags that put you in jeopardy? What happened at the airport? How did they know to arrest you? And so much more...

Something From My Parents But Never Got…

I always wish that my mom can understand me. What I wanted from them dat I never got was for me to do what I want to do; my parent always tried they best.

-Miguel

From The Beat: Can you imagine yourself a father? Would you allow your child to do whatever he or she wants?

Time Capsule

If I had a time capsule I'd put a gun. I need a gun to live 'cause the streets is hectic. It's either kill or be killed. But even killas get killed. But you know what they say, "Live by the gun, die by the gun." That's why I like the song lyric that go: "I ma ride wit' my mf ninja. Most likely I'm gonna die with my finger on the trigger. Don't worry about mine. I'm gonna grind 'til I get it. Tell all my ninjas the sky's the limit."

-Jr

From The Beat: Yes, we know what they say, and what they say is true. So why do you keep on living by the gun? Why would you want to die with your finger on the trigger. Dead is dead, whether you're squeezing off a round or not. And it lasts forever.

Let Me Spit Some Game

Love is what you make it,
But you have to find it,
Also if your patient,
Love will come to you, but,
You have to keep yo eyes open,
'Cause if you miss it,
It can pass you by, and,
To all the young ladies and homies,
Know that you'll have your time
To experience love
Trust me, be patient
And love will fall in your hands. Just look.

-Halo

From The Beat: We're looking... Where's the love you promised?

My Own Song Lyrics

What's good with The Beat within? Me, shhh, just chillin', stayin' motivated, ya dig. But I say some of the songs I could ralte to is my own lyrics. I got a lot of versus and shhh, but I'm go spit this one:

"I go hard in the paint like shaa, catch me on the block with a weapons stack/A ninja talk shhh I'll leave him flat on his back, and I neve been a square and that's a real fact/Real ninjas don't talk, real ninjas just bust, see me reachin' fa my hop, now his ass on hush/You didn't wanna say nothin' when a ninja start bustin', I seen you with cha ninjas meant yo' ass was just frontin'/keep it on the low, I might let cho ass slide, but you betta be cool next time you ride by/My ninjas don't play, you betta check the crime rate, yeah we started in one place then we flood the whole Bay/One day you a beast, the next day you on a tee."

-Young Bundy

From The Beat: Who decides what a "real ninja" is? Your definition, if this song is accurate, is tied entirely to the violence on the streets (and we had to tone down some of the violence of your lyrics as inappropriate for The Beat). Does that mean that the 2,000,000 Americans enslaved in our prison system are the real ninjas of the country? If so, we're happy to be "fake" if that equals free. Your song threatens that your boys will "flood the whole Bay," but the only flood we've seen is here, behind these thick walls. And for what? A reputation that only lasts a second? Ah, what a waste, what a waste!

Gettin' To Me

It was late night
Slangin' white
An' now I'm gone
Done did it to me
Them drugs and dat money start getting' to me
Shhh

-Steven

From The Beat: And now you're gone... but not forever. How has your current situation affected the way you think about the future? Any changes coming to you?

How I Feel Being Locked Up

Excuse my language. I'm just kinda hot 'cause it's so nasty in here. Man, I've only been here for a week an' I'm already sick of dis place. Da food is can, da staff bug da hell outta me. Even da air don't seem fresh. But chu know, get it how you live, huh.

Ninjas don't really plan on comin' here, but chu know, things happen. We hardly ever get any time out of our boxes. Da only time we get to exercise is PE. Man, all I know is if I don't get out of here soon, I might jus' go crazy. But 'til den I'm stuck.

-Dre Bo Low

From The Beat: Is this your first time being locked up? You write as if all the hardships about jail are a surprise to you. What did you expect it to be like? It's not designed to make you want to come back, but to make you want to stay out. When you get out of here, what are you going to change about your life so that you don't have to experience these deprivations ever again?

I Want To See My Mom

Upset because I want to get out of here. I haven't seen my mom in a while, so I really want to spend time with her, and go to school and just do the things I want to. Just get out of here. See, I'm grown up so I'm goin' to get a job.

-Ali

From The Beat: It's hard to get a job at your age. And it gets even harder if you don't have a high school diploma. We strongly urge you to put school at the top of your list of things you have to do, because that education that you don't yet have is the key to staying out!

LCR

LCR wouldn't be the place to be
Bein' here is hella weak
You catch time for dress codes
Catch time for getting a D in one class
No home passes
No outings
I've been here for four months
Haven't left the Ranch ever since
I rather do my time in the halls
Damn, I regret running
From my other group homes
So, to all those who are goin'
To a group home
Do that shhh
And go home
'Cause LCR wouldn't be a place to be
Bein' in here is hella weak
Forget LCR

-EB

From The Beat: Maybe the Ranch is hella weak for you, and that's okay. Is the real problem being anywhere away from home, when home's where your heart is, or do you have real grievances against the program at the Ranch? What could you suggest that's really constructive, for programs at the Ranch? What would you like to learn or to do, to produce, while you're down there?

Song Lyrics

What's up with The Beat? It's ya boy, Mike, writing from up here at the Ranch. I'm 'bout to write up on this topic, man. It's a couple of song lyrics I can relate to. I relate to them because it's real. The stuff they be sayin'--it's about what we go through every day. The lyrics are from Lil' Wayne and T.I. Those are my two favorite rappers. They be rapping about some real shhh. Here's some of the shhh my favorite rappers be rappin', some real shhh. Here's some of what T.I. be sayin':

1. Pulling out that pistol, ninja
   Who you think you finna scare?
   20 rounds of missiles
   Have you pissin' in your underwear

I relate to that because ninjas be pulling they lil' pistol out like I'm supposed to be scared.

2. I tote a pound
   So you better tone it down
   I suggest you prepare yourself
   For when it's going down
   (My 'hood,) the jets
   Where you gon' catch me
   Right up at the top

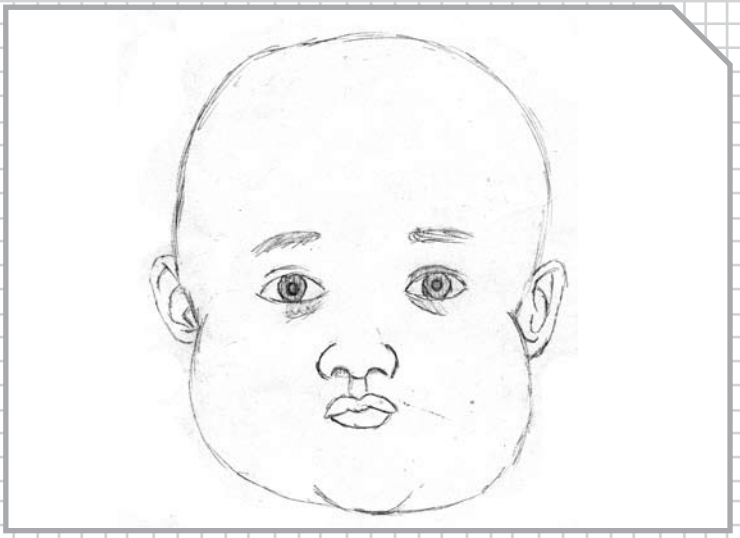
I relate to that because where I hold the banga, ninjas better be ready, 'cause I ain't gonna hold it and not use it.

3. Ninja, you still (from our 'hood)
   You can tell ain't nothing changed
   But my address on the mail

I relate to that one because, just 'cause I'm at the Ranch, don't mean I'm out the gate. It's more lyrics, but I gotta wrap it up, 'cause The Beat 'bout to be over.

-Mike

From The Beat: You've been honest in your choices of rap lyrics that relate to your life, Mike, which exposes you. Even if you, as you seem to imply, only carry a weapon for your own defense, a whole lot of harm can come from that gun. Maybe, because of that gun, you take chances and go to dangerous areas, hang with people you may not always trust, that you wouldn't let yourself get into if you weren't carrying. But when you or anybody relies on a weapon, sooner or later don't you think you're going to use it? Then you threaten, wound or kill someone and/or you go down. How can you protect and live your life without resorting to depending on any weapons?



Love My Mom

It's a lot of shhh I ain't got from my parents like love. I don't know why the reason was, because I did want it. At the time because I was out an the streets beating people an' takin' ninja money, so I didn't have no time for love from my mom. It's not like that she did not want to give it to me. I did want to accept it from her. My mom love me and I love her with all my heart.

-T

From The Beat: We're not sure we understand this. It sounds like you're saying that you really didn't have time for your mother's love since you were out doing dirt. What is your relationship with your mom today?

Quintessence Of Pulchritude

What it is wit' da Beat? I ain't got too much to say, but I want to write about my pops. I always wanted him to be a father, but he was never there for me or my baby sister. So I had to step up at a young age and try and get a job. When I got denied for being too young, I was forced to sell drugs and rob people for money and to take care of my family.

-Omar

From The Beat: Well, if you had to rob people and sell drugs to care for your baby sister, who is caring for her now that you are unable to? It appears that there were other options than those you chose. Also, tell us what your title means. We always thought pulchritude meant literary beauty, so how is this beautiful?

Once An Addict, Always An Addict

Let me spit the venom
This poison that's been constantly
Banging my mind
Index finger on the trigger
Got me banging the nine
Every time I take this medicine
It's like a thousand needles killing me slowly
Except one at a time
I can hear the streets calling me
Screaming my name
But if I kill this (guy)
The world would be screaming my name
Am I insane
Because I expect the same results?
They messed me up in the head
When they told me
It's not my fault
Awww…
I can't stop bleeding
These voices in my head
Won't stop screaming
My flesh tells me some drugs
Is what I am needing
And if I don't get it
Then I am gone continue bleeding
(The voice of an angel)
Don't worry, little child
I know the world's getting wild
But the Lord told me
To tell you
Just put on a smile"
Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side

From The Beat: You refer to your "medicine" in your beautiful poems, but often with anguish—both the kinds of "medicine" you get in the streets and pills the nurse at the Ranch prescribes for you. Sometimes you curse the medicine; sometimes you allude to it as if it were the only thing you can count on to keep you sane. Now you've graduated from your program on the Ranch and you're in your new home, we hope you continue to write your fabulous poems!

I Woke Up

Too strong
But at the same time
I am too weak
My spirit won't let me eat
My mind feels like
It's at its peak
People get killed every day
So what makes me so special?
It's the drive
To stay alive
Until it's really my time
To die
Because, really
None of us
Don't wanna go to sleep
So I give this speech
As to say
We worship money
More than we worship God
But why is that?
Why are we willing to do anything
For that almighty dollar?
It is our idol
And our life
And, yet
We would kill our own life
Trying to obtain
This precious material
We love money
Like little kids love cereal
I will not be trapped
My the cell
In my mind
That was designed for me
Neither to see, smell, touch or taste
So whoever created it
I come to tell them
That it was a waste
We are weak by ourselves
But together we are strong
We used to seeing our own kind
Getting his head blown off
Or babies making babies
Black fathers now days are lazy
Can you hear the crows?
Do you understand the show
That has been put in front of your race?
It's good
All you gotta do
Is stick your tongue out
And have a taste
Please help me
To stop bleeding on the inside
And start asking the question
Why?
Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side

From The Beat: Why do people love money? Why are fathers lazy? Why are you still alive when so many of your homies are gone forever? You're the poet, the philosopher. What happens to people that they make fools of themselves, sell themselves out, risk losing everything, for some cash? What's so terribly, tragically missing in them without money? What do dollars really buy them? Why are the young men and women risking their lives, killing each other, willing to die, for their homies, turf, gang? Why can't they get out and stay out of the streets, when they leave juvy?

Click Clack

Click, clack
That's the sound of my weapon
Demons in the chamber
Asking when am I let 'em fly?
Ripping flesh with the best of those tools
Went to school
With some of the best
Of these fools
The crow's watching you
And so is my grin
You can take my body
But I still got my mind
Pimps and hoes love a fresh piece of ass
And them whores give it up
For that quick cold cash
That quick cold cash can get you
A fit piece of ass
Like animals
That's all we think about
We feel big with the money
But when it's gone
We shrink without
Flashy jewelry and gold teeth
In our mouth
Stop
But, really, I am just thinking
On a different level
Like Super Mario
I had to get to that different level
We just digging ourselves
Deeper in the dirt
But with a different shovel
Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side

From The Beat: Money may attract the ladies, but when you or anybody starts to rely on cash, fancy cars or bling bling, you've already lost most women's hearts, so the question becomes: are all of you after these ladies' hearts or just their bodies? Everybody's part animal, but that doesn't mean you have to demean these women or yourself by appealing to them with cold cash or glitter. That's insulting. What about your heart, imagination, humor, sincerity, insight into how life works, goodness, honesty, experience, genius?

If I Could Go Anywhere

What it do Beat? It's ya boy Gully Bub, and if I could go anywhere, I would go to Africa. I say that 'cause all my ancestors come from there. I would go back to try to help the starving. I would just go back to be wit' ma people. All right Beat, I'm out.

-Gully Bub

From The Beat: This is interesting, GB, but you could have written much more. Have you studied anything about Africa? Do you know where your ancestors come from (which country)? Africa is a huge continent (much, much bigger than the U.S.), so you might have to do some research to figure out which part your people come from.

My Time

I use my time by working out for about thirty minutes to an hour. I also think about what are the things I'm not going to do for me to not comeback. I also read a lot of books, so I can learn how to read, because I am not a reader.

- Morro

From The Beat: It sounds like you're using your time in juvy very wisely. What would it take for you to change your life so you'll never mess up and get arrested again?

X-Raided Macaframa Lyrics

It don't take much to keep yo' man happy
Doin' eight months
But it ain't no contact visits
So you can't touch
An' county time ain't no joke
In San Francisco
This shhh will have you mental
'Cause you can't smoke
You be stressed out
Hoping that you beat yo' case
Three strikes
Trying to wipe out my whole race
Now here comes yo' girl
Since you done got your time
Sayin' dat she can't hang
Witch, is you out yo' mind?
She got everything you own
Vehicle, clothes, even yo' home
Not a penny on yo' books
'Cause the witch is gone

Now this for the homies
That got the Nike wearing (beezies)
Ponytails in they hair
Sportin' other witch's clothes
Ruggish, thuggish, raggedy like the type
That wakes up in the morning
Puts on some sweats
And be, like "forget it"
Ninja, don't lie
You know I just describe yo' baby's momma
The type of witch that's even crooked
To start some drama
Like a comma
Putting pounces in yo' sentences
Y'all can't even get along
On reconcilable differences
That witch is famous for so many nameless sticks
That penetrated
And she's gameless
That's how you know
She's never been with Smoke

She's aimless, where is you headed?
Witch, is you knowin'?
Getting on my nerves
Like my bunkie when he's snorin'
She's a forty-ounce swigga
Weed smoker
Needin' to give that shhh up
Her beer belly overlappin'
She needin' to do some sit-ups
She's lazy as can be
And will never make no progress
So shake that beezie
That's all I can suggest
Ninga!

I relate to everything he says in this song, except for the county time--Ranch time instead of that-- but everything else I can relate to, but other than that, this song sick! It's the homie, Smokey up at the Ranch!

-Smokey

From The Beat: Even through you've chosen rap lyrics that are really clever and tell a real if sad story, we wish you'd written more about how this rap resonates with you. However, this rap is pretty cruel when it trashes this guy's girlfriend. You don't write what friend you're directing this rap at, but if you have some advice for him you think he really needs to hear, why don't you take him aside and tell him in a way that's kind?

Block Bound

What's poppin' wit' The Beat? This yo' boy A.N.T.O. out of Unit 7. Yeah, off top, ya boy holding it down.

Some song lyrics that I can relate to is one of my big homies, "Renov." He said: "I'm block bound, back street to da front, the towers where ninjas leave you sleep in ya trunk, ninjas hating on a ninja 'cause I keep pulling up in a scrape in a mob in a van on dubs, no mutts, yo. I ride wit' a clan of thugs, got a whole bunch of guns, so we hard from clubs, got a whole lot of drugs, so ninja come and cop some."

I can relate to this because I'm from the streets and it's cold out there.

-Anto

From The Beat: Is it warmer in here than it is out there? We ask you that question because we wonder if you've thought ahead about where your path might take you. We don't want this song lyric to be replaced by another, like Johnny Cash's Folsom Prison Blues: "I hear that train a-comin', it's rollin' around the bend/And I ain't seen the sunshine since I don't know when/I'm stuck in Folsom prison and time keeps draggin' on."

My Favorite Lyrics

The Jacka (Written by my friend)

You think I'm nice
But that's really not me
I live a life
That you never gonna see
I'm the last of my kind
Ninjas fight
They don't war like me!

Tupac...
Ninjas bustin' shots
Like they lost their mind
Like 25-to-life
Never crossed they mind

Tupac...
I did the best I could
Raised in insanity
So God better take me in heaven
'Cause I ain't beggin' for my life
Ain't nothing worse
Than this cursed ass hopeless life
'Cause I'm troublesome!

That's some lyrics from the late, great Tupac,
And this be Smokey
Comin' at you from LCR
I like these lyrics
'Cause they express how I think
All right, then
Late!

-Smokey

From The Beat: It's too bad you didn't write more about why these specific lyrics, as revealing and haunting as they are, resonate in your life. Do you feel deep inside that your soul is not kind and nice? Do you feel that you were raised in insanity and that life is hopeless?

Frustration

If I was my emotion, I would probably be frustrated with myself. I keep coming back to this place even though I hate it. I keep coming back. This shhh is tiring.

-Money Earnin Vernon

From The Beat: This is much too short. There is so much more we want to know. We like the emotion you've identified yourself with, but we wonder just how much you hate this place if you just keep coming back. What prevents you from staying out?

Wanna Be Like Me

I'm the one and only
Ain't no others like me
You know I been writin' for The Beat
For a while now
And I been tired of seeing
People tryin' to use my name
Like I'm a damn celebrity
You can't be me
Come up with somethin' else
Try something new
'Cause I'm the one and only Birdman
Bird
However you wanna hear it
The one and only

-Birdman

From The Beat: Where did you encounter another Birdman? What has the name confusion done to mess things up for you?

My Record

If I had a time capsule, I would put my criminal record in so people in the future would know how our laws and what people did in our time.

-Tookie Tookie

From The Beat: It seems like you're being pretty lazy. You'd put just one thing into your time capsule about one part of one life. Just like you're being lazy by giving The Beat just one sentence in an hour's workshop. Next time, write more.

God better take me in heaven
'Cause I ain't beggin'
for my life

Song Lyrics

I think that a song that relates to me is "Coward Of The County". I think that because in that song there is a boy who walks away from trouble. As he gets older he does the same thing and just walks away. One day he just gets tired of it and beats the crap out of the people who tried to start trouble with him. And that's kind of why I'm in here. I got tired of walking away from a guy who was talking crap and tried to stab him.

-Nacho

From The Beat: Unfortunately, Nacho, there's a big difference (especially in the eyes of the law) between beating the crap out of somebody and stabbing him... We don't know what happened to your victim, but we can see that by not walking away (one more time), you also stabbed yourself!

Time Capsule

If I was making a time capsule, the things I would put in it are a picture of a forest and all the tress, an Ipod, and a paper with old English letters. I would put the picture of the trees so they could see how many trees we have now. An Ipod so they could see how we listen to music now, because in the future they might have a new way of listening to music. And the old English letters because someone might like writing in old English letters like a lot of people nowadays do.

-Nacho

From The Beat: Do you think those who discover your time capsule and listen to the music on your Ipod will understand or like the music of today? Do you like the music of your parents' generation?

My Dad Was A Homeboy

Something I always wanted from my parents but never got would probably be discipline because me and my dad were more like homeboys. We would chill and drink with each other. Yeah, it was cool, but I think if he was more hard on me I probably would not be a mess up. But I will not blame that on him. He is a good father to me and my lil' brothers.

-Lil' Chris

From The Beat: Of course it's nice to have a father you can chill with, but at the same time, a father has a responsibility to teach his children what's right, and to protect them from what's wrong. We don't want to blame your father for the choices you've made, but we are interested to know how you plan to be a different kind of father to your own children, when you have them, than he was to you.

Always And Forever

Always and forever can mean a lot of things.
In a relationship, it can mean I love you
and I want to be with you forever,
or it can mean,
I only want to love you for one night.
But to my familia,
it means that we stay strong always
and never give up
no matter what we do,
no matter what we say.
We will love each other
always and forever.
That's our way of saying
always and forever.

-Minnie Mouse

From The Beat: It is refreshing to read a piece of writing from The Beat where someone is talking about the strength of their family. Oftentimes, it seems like young people end up in trouble because they don't have the unconditional love that you write about here.

Crazy

The song I chose was "Crazy" by Gnarls Barkley. I chose this song because I am crazy. All my friends call me crazy, and I have been crazy all of my life, and always will be.

Ever since I have been in Juvenile Hall, I have been far from crazy. Although my life has not been the crazy, my parents' lives has been the craziest. They have been looking for lawyers to get me out of here as fast as possible.

Once I get out, I have to keep my craziness on the DL (down low). Once I am off probation, I will be back to very crazy.

Lyrics
Do you think I'm crazy
Do you think I'm crazy
Do you think I'm crazy
Possibly

-Lucas

From The Beat: This would be a much stronger piece if you gave some examples of what it means to you to be "crazy." We're glad that you plan to control your craziness when you get out so you can get off probation, but why would you then go back to being crazy if it's what got you here to begin with?

Hey, Hey, Hey

What's up? This is me, Crazy. Something that I wanted from my jefitos, it was a ranfla to be cruising around with the homies and with some jainas. But I'm here at that torcida facing 20 to vida.

-Crazy

From The Beat: Most people get their cars by working for them, and it usually takes some time to save the money. But since you could only give us a couple of sentences in a one-hour workshop, it looks like maybe you were too lazy to work for that ranfla. We don't know what to tell you about the time you're facing, except that we're very sorry.

Marijuana

Getting high till we die
It ain't no lie,
Smoking the green that's gonna get us real high
Got some of the sticky green so good to me
Taking dose tokes that making me choke
Smoking off a bong
Now I got my blood shot eyes
I think I'ma fly
A feeling you get when you real high
Because marijuana I am...

-Sergio Psycho

From The Beat: Besides getting high, what else do you dream about?

Making Money

Aye, what's good Beat? It's your boy coming through from hall time, just chillin', about to head home soon.

I'm not feeling this topics so I'm gonna let you know what's going on. Well, work is coo'. I gotta job in here so I be going OTs and shh, making my paper and helping out with the family because they need it more then I do. Well, let me say that there is no better feeling then to put money in my mom's hand and say: "This is for you." It's about time I start helping out with the bills, giving to family instead of taking away from them. Well Beat, I'ma cut out, much love from your boy.

-The one you love to hate

From The Beat: Wow, this is a really powerful piece about taking responsibility and how powerful that feeling can be. What if people got addicted to being responsible instead of to drugs or street life? Wouldn't it be a different world then?

Time Capsule

In my time capsule, I would put a gun to show how easy a life could be taken. Then I would put a red and blue rag to show that there was conflict between people and their own race. After that I would put some Ben- Davises to show how us gang-bangers wear our clothes. Then I would put a letter to say how cold this world could be or it could be so amazing as if you're in heaven.

-C

From The Beat: We would love for you to write about some of those ways the world can be "so amazing as if you're in heaven." And we would love to read how this world can be so cold, too.

Locked Love

You're my locked out angel from up above
You're the only lady that has my love
No one in this life time will take my love
'Cause I know god sent you from up above
Lookin' so sexy...
I'm so glad that I have you
The one and only one I call boo
And I just want you to know that I really do love you.

-Feelin' Within

From The Beat: As important as it is to say you love her, it's even more important to show you love her by choosing not to do the things that allow the system to take you from her.

Wanting That Lexus

Well, something that I've always wanted from my parents was my dad's car which was a Lexus because it was a really nice car. But that's something that I've always wanted from my parents.

-V

From The Beat: You can certainly do better than this! Just two sentences in an hour's workshop! Come on! By the way, did someone give that Lexus to your parents, or did they work for it?

La Torcida

Something that I wanted from my parents, it was a ranfla. I was going to get that ranfla but I'm over here at that torcida. But never give up something you want. Went you want something, try your best to get it.

It is my first time bein' at la torcida, but ain't tripping, 'cause when you are locked up, you recognize everything. When you are locked up, you see who are your true friends. Trust no jaina 'cause they say that they waiting for you and they're are over there with another vato.

-Downer

From The Beat: Tell us why should she wait for you? Didn't you show her that something else was more important to you than she is by getting yourself locked up? Would she be wrong if she wrote, "Trust no vato."

Life

Well, I'm not feeling none of the topics today. I'm gonna write about what's up with my life at this point.

I got my baby's picture yesterday and damn, a lot of shhh was going through my mind, like how when I get out I have to stay cool and get a legit job, so I can support my baby's mom and my daughter and stay close to my family.

-Boogie Man

From The Beat: Seeing your baby's picture is a big realization that you need to change your ways. Maybe being locked up will give you the time to make a plan about how you want to change and take care of your family.

No Money

Something that I always wanted from my parents was money that I never got. I never got a dollar or a dime. When I asked for money, my parents tell me no, so I get mad and I steal my mom money and my dad too.

-Jon

From The Beat: Did your parents have money to give you? What happened when you stole money from them? Did you ever get caught?

A Panther Song

Chorus:
When I die, chola don't cry
Just know your cholo when I'm bangin'
(oh when I'm bangin')
And when my tiempo comes around
homegirl you know I'll go out bangin'
(I go out bangin)
(You know that is a trip)...
Verse 1:
Grew up without shhh,
Esta world is a lot of shhh,
Walked this hardest barrio,
Kept my hand on a pistol grip,
Homeboys don't screw around,
This cast is real, taught these chavalons,
How to take some steps to make some meals,
An' now they're quick holmes,
'Cause we the baddest holmes,
Trippin' up my jefe, shootin' up in the corner alone,
I see mi madre cryin' mija all the time,
I miss my carnal, up in Folsom doing time.
I walked this barrio with my head up high,
Keep one eye on everyone passin' by
Keep trucha with la jura when they come my way,
'Cause one more strike for me, mija, they throw that key away,
Just want to let you know if there's a second chance,
Your're my vida mija, the best part of my past...
Chorus

Pues simon Beaters, you know who this gots to be that one and only one "Pantera,",just droppin' it down. The reason why I choose these lyrics it's 'cause I miss my downest chola by my side. I would like to let her know how I feel before I pass away, and I tell her. "Check this out, Mija. You know vatos trip an this barrio, right? So just in case tomorrow it ain't one, you know where I stand at, right." Simon to the homegirls.

-Pantera

From The Beat: We're not particularly impressed that your barrio is "the baddest" because we here that from all over the Bay. But we are impressed when you write that they'll throw away the key unless you get your act together. Time to make some difficult decisions about what kind of future you want — and whether you want to spend it with a chola or locked up with only a bunch of cholos.

A Good Day For Travieso

Q-vole Beat? It's Travieso mas chignon. Well today was a "firme" day for me. I went to court and I got a year hall time with time served. So that means, I only got about eight months left. It's nothing to this chingon, I'm going to try and stay in the max unit(b-9). So to those who know me and to The Beat, keep cool and keep your heads above the waters. You'll know were I'll be at. Alratos.

-Travieso

From The Beat: Yeah, we know where you'll be for the next eight months, anyway. Glad to hear they're not shipping you off! Now, we want you to start thinking about life after the hall so that we don't have to meet you here again.

Time Capsule

If I was making a time capsule, I would put a poem that I wrote the last time I was locked up. It's about my lil' cousin who passed away while I was locked up. He was only 8 years old. He got hit by a car. I would put the poem 'cause it was read at his funeral and it touched a lot of people.

When he died, it brought my family closer together and that's why I would put my poem in the time capsule.

-Droopy

From The Beat: That poem would be a really powerful thing to put into a time capsule because people in the future would be looking at a really important moment from your family's life.

Family Picture Definitely In The Time Capsule

I would put my family's picture in my capsule. I would also put my court papers in there, so in time they will be gone. I would also put my uncle's lucky dollar coin in there that he gave me, because it means something to me. If someone found it they would understand ancient money, a screwed up juvenile that really didn't care about the law till now, and how me and my family looked. My time capsule is that and I hope people would see it.

-Lopez

From The Beat: The idea of putting court papers in the Time Capsule is really brilliant. In a way, those documents will be a record of you for generations and historians will use that to analyze what it was like for young people in your time.

Lyrics That Relate To Me

The song that relates to my life is: " I tried so hard" by Bone Thugz 'n' Harmony 'cause no matter what I do and how hard I try to stay outta trouble, I always mess up because I can't stop being who I am and being about my shhh, someone's always got to test. Ya feel? Well that's all I gots to say.

-Shy boy

From The Beat: Hmmm, but how hard did you try really? It seems like you are trying but feel like your true calling is to be the way you are. What do you think it will take for you to make a real change?

Songs in My Head

The songs that stay in my head are Jacka's "Hey girl, what's ya name?" or 112's "You all ready know."

The 112 song is just to put people in the mood and it goes like this: "Tonight's the night, girl/ I'm trying to give you that thing to make you say yes/ from the kitchen floor to the fireplace/ incense burning you, baby/ talking that shh to me/ cancel the phone/ only the sounds I'm trying to hear is you .../ ... and I been thinking about it all night long."

The Jacka song influences me to keep going in life so that I can make it and be somebody. It goes: "Hey girl, what's ya name?/ It's da Jacka, yeah I'ma dope deal on top of that I'm a liar and a steala/ you gotta remember, boy/ I'm real big like King Kong and Godzilla in the same room/ I'm insane, load runin' from da boy's havin fun/ but I always see the pin, so yeah, now look what I go through/ I know you want me to stay all night/but I gotta catch a flight to the next state/ so I could blow, ya know/ hey girl, what's ya name.

-Ya Boi Shady

From The Beat: This is a really interesting look inside your mind and how you think about music. Do you find yourself singing these songs while you walk around your daily activities in the Hall?

Fighter

I'm a fighter
This is my night to fight.
I gotta bob and weave just right.
If I don't I'll get slammed, KO'd
That's it, a rap,,, good night.

-Big Kid

From The Beat: And a good night to you, too!

Girl

You and I sitting in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-G, me for you and you for me, baby girl we were meant to be.
(Verse 1: Giant Samoa)
The only time I see you is when I'm in my sleep turnin' on the heat recoilin' the sheets
Yo' love is what I'm gonna keep
I wanna see yo' face, feel yo' touch
A lot of people know now that I love you so much
But I'm wonderin' when I'm gonna see you again
My love for you goes father than you just bein' my friend
You's my baby, my girl and even my queen
It I could, I would ask you baby girl to marry me
You know what I'm sayin' and you know where I'm coming from
But some people say that what we got is just puppy love
(But they gonna talk, they gonna talk, they gonna talk
They gonna say a lot of things about what we've got)
And we've got it love
And what we have is trust
And I know deep down inside
That there's a great future for us
(Chorus)
(Verse 2 : Tiny Samoa)
My beautiful phat queen
You the girl of my dreams
You give me the definition on what love really means
I wanna picture you and me sitting in a tree,
Me feeding you strawberries while we K-I-S-S-I-N-G
Me for you and you for me
Baby girl, we were meant to be
I will forever love you till the day that I die
Oh how I want you to be the woman of my life
I wanna be yo' husband
Can you be my wife
'Cause I really want you right there by my side
When I'm wakin' up every morning or getting ready to sleep at night
Cuddling wit' you in bed while I'm holding you tight
Phat, I miss massaging yo' body in different kinds of ways and different places
But what I miss the most is those cute little baby faces
To have a girl like you I thank the lord, I'm truly blessed
I miss when you would lay yo' head comfortably upon my chest
I miss the sweet smell of the Herbal Essence in yo' hair
And I also miss the sweet smell of perfume you always wear
I miss looking deeply into yo' beautiful eyes
Ask me anything and I'll do it 'cause you got me hypnotized
I'm like a singing lovin' puppet that's hanging on a string
Pull 'em anywhere and baby girl I'll do anything

-Giant Samoa and Tiny Samoa

From The Beat: We don't often see such a long and complete love poem written by two different boys. We hope you're not both in love with the same girl! Now, if you can put the skills it took to write this fine poem into preparing yourselves for a better future (and by that we mean a free one), we'll expect good things to happen.

Beer!

Something I always wanted from my parents and never got it. Was beer, they given me everything but something I realy wanted was beer. But they never gave it to me.

I guess it's because they are good parents and I really appreciate my parents I love them, and I know they love me.

-Alex

From The Beat: You are lucky to have parents like these! Just read the Beat's pages, and see how many young people suffered from NOT having parents who tried to keep them away from illegal drinking and other things!

The Only Dad I Have

What's up Beat, this is James coming from San Jose. Yeah, I just want to tell you about my dad. I love him by I never got along with him. So I am here just to tell you why I think about this something you always wanted from your parents but never got....

Well it goes like this. My dad says he will buy me and my brothers and sister clothes and new shoes, but he will not do it, so I get mad at him. 'Cause he will say he is going to buy us things but he don't, so when he says that he is going to buy us some things I don't care no more.

So yeah me and my dad never got along, but I am in the hall thinking about what to do. But yeah love him now 'cause I realize that I only have one dad so I don't care now if he gets me it or not, 'cause I realize that I am not the only kid he has. Well I am going now, k late!!!!

-Son

From The Beat: Broken promises can kill trust faster than a bullet, especially when they come from a parent, but you sound like you've taken a mature attitude towards it. Also, it might help to put yourself in his shoes... like maybe he thought he'd be able to afford it, and then realized he couldn't? Imagine how awful it must feel as a parent to want to buy stuff for your kids but not have the money. Do you feel like your relationship with him is improving?

"The Streets Are Callin' Me"

I live a lifestyle covered up by dark clouds dealin' with these suckas and they always seem to bark loud still I keep a strap for when I come across a killa I dream that day I'll have to fight that killa in the mirror.

I wake up every morning hit my fifth and hold my lid just another day to see what tomorrows got to give I'm addicted to this liquor in a daze I peel another sticker off anotha 40 oz and wonder how did my life get here?

My mother prays that I quit the life I lead and I try to change my ways but these streets are callin' me I love her to death but at the same time I'm a soldier I gotta put in work rivals know they cant take over.

This song relates to me and my life pretty much 'cause I feel it everyday. Everyday seems to get darker and darker. After all these years the only person I fear is myself. Sometimes when hope is lost liquor and blunts seem to do the job.

My moms always tellin me to stop banging. She tells me and my older brother but we can't. We got something to right for. And we ain't stopping till the fights battles and wars are over. And in my eyes the only end is when I pass the next life. RIP to all my fallen soldiers.

-S

From The Beat: A famous blues musician used to say "The blues ain't nothin' but a good man feeling bad." That's what we thought of reading this heartbroken and heartbreaking piece. You write as if your life is already over, as if you are doomed to fight this war, as if you have no choice. Do you believe that? How did you first come in to your life?

My Racing Mind

Everyday, before I try to fall asleep,
my mind begins to race.
I start thinking back to all those days
when I used to hang with my so-called "friends,"
when I would smoke my so-called true love "crystal."
Then I think of all those stupid and ridiculous things
I used to do like steal cars and sell drugs,
and try to be accepted by men
who didn't ever accept themselves,
and how the whole time I was looking for acceptance
there was one man who always accepted me for who I was,
and who I am now.
I could never be without him.
So, every night my mind goes through
twenty different subjects and
forty different levels of emotions.
It drives me so very crazy, cause the
guilty conscience my brain never lets me
be without, of all those traumatic things
in my life that haunt me day by day.
And I hope that one day I find a
way to make the painful thoughts go away.

-Lil' Sapita

From The Beat: Once again, you are bringing the self-knowledge and blowing our minds. You seem to recognize so much about your past and the people around you – being loved by men who "don't accept themselves" is a very wise statement. Perhaps through writing, you'll be able to work through the guilt and pain from your past. You seem well on your way.

What I Always Wanted

Hey, what up Beat? How you doing? Well, it's me again, Changa coming through. Well, what I always wanted from my parents is patience, because they have no patience for me. They always expect me to do good, but they push me hard and I try but they don't see it. And I always wanted them to be proud of me and never heard them say: "I'm proud of you." That kinda really hurts me, because they're my parents and I never heard them say it. But, I hope one day that day will come.

Until then, I'll be waiting. Well, that's all now, Beat. Thanks for listening, and to all – stay up and stay solid. Much respect ...

-Changa

From The Beat: Patience is an important, yet difficult thing to ask for. Every kid wants their parents to unconditionally care for them, but it is also our parents' duty to encourage us to be responsible. Maybe you should express this concern to your parents and let them know that you are trying but you need their encouragement.

Mi Amor

I love you,
I need you,
I care about you.
No matter what happens between us,
I love you with all my heart,
Forever and ever and ever!
Don't ever forget that!
You know who you are!
I love you!
One love.

-Huera

From The Beat: This piece is sweet and full of love for your friends, unfortunately we needs to pull their names from your piece. It is important to have this connection and not let drama come between true friends, but it is also important to think about how we let our friends influence us.

Hi-Tech Time Capsule

What I would put in a time capsule would be a lot of things. The first thing that I would put in the capsule would be a Dodge Viper. This would go in there because in the future, the people will be able to see what nice cars look like back in the past. I would put in a laptop so when someone finds the capsule, they could compare the laptop to their computers.

They would be able to see a difference between the two. I would also stick in a cell phone so the future people can compare their cellular phones. I would also stick in an iPod for my last item. This would go in so the future would know how we listened to music. I would put all this stuff in to show what we accomplished in the past. And maybe the future will learn from us.

-J-Pizzle

From The Beat: We can tell from this piece that you must be pretty tech saavy – who knows, you might just end up inventing one of the computers or machines people use in the future! [Or else design a car even cooler than a Dodge Viper]

Hail Mary

The song I think reflects on me or my way of thinking. Is " Hail Mary" by Tupac. The lyric that always sticks with me is "I ain't a kill but don't but don't push me, revenge is the sweetest joy next to getting p****." But I think that's how it is with a lot of my homeboys. Good luck to all the homeboys and their court dates.

-Grinch

From The Beat: Short term, revenge is sweet. But has it ever happened that the revenge just ended up getting more revenge back, and then it all escalated? Have you ever experienced getting revenge, or having someone take revenge on you?

Dream

Wondering where I am under the scarlet light,
Thinking about you every contagious night.
Locked up behind bars wondering where you are.
Chained up behind like a criminal holding in my fears.
Dreamed about you last night woke up with a fright
Never knew how it felt to cry with all my might
Until I had a dream, a dream of you that night.

-Vinh

From The Beat: This poem will haunt readers the way your dream haunts you... it's sad and frightening but also filled with love. Who is the person who inspired such lyrical writing from you? Who fills your Scarlet night?

The Animal I Have Become

The song that best describes my life is "The animal I have become" by Three Days Grace. This song best represents my struggle growing up.

I never had trouble in school or at home but what has always been a problem was my anger. I have learned to control it better now but when I do lose it I have a need to beat the hell out of whoever made me that angry.

This song always, and I mean always, makes me remember the things I've done while angry. The part of the song that always stuck in my head through goes like this, "Somebody help me through this nightmare, I can't control myself, so what if you can see the darkest side of me. No one will ever tame the animal I have become."

-Wolverine

From The Beat: It's good timing that this piece comes out on Halloween, because reading it made us shudder. From The Beat Within to The Beast Within! But you seem to be learning how to work with the anger inside you, little by little.... What sorts of things are you learning to help you?

All I Need

What up! If I were making a time capsule I would put, " A Q P of chronic in a jar with a pack of back woods. I would put Privilege Heem, about nine bottles. I would put several cartons of Camel cigarettes. I would put 10 brand new lighters. A pack of zig-zags. A box of condoms. Lotion & my fifi. I would need some clean clothes. And my music player, my pictures. " that is all I need. Peace out Beat Within.

-Blunt Man

From The Beat: You know what this box is missing? You've got the dope, you've got the drugs, you've got sex (safe sex, good thinking). But what about your future – your dreams, your imagination of what you want to be? Do you think this is all it takes to represent you? What about your hopes in life?

Things I Got From My Parents

I wanted something from parent. Then my mom got mad because I failed my report card, and then my dad came in the room. He got a belt and starting hitting me.

Then my mom came in and said stop hitting me, then she told me to get in the car and they took me to the mall and got me an X box 360 for my birthday.

Then I went to school and I pass my test and dad got happy and we went to go fishing in the ocean on a boat. We caught a shark, it was little shark.

We ate the shark, and it was good. My mom said she got me something I went to my room it was a dog a pit blue nose. It was cool and it bit me that was a story.

-David

From The Beat: Man this piece started out sad, but ended up great! We hope that pit bull bite wasn't too painful... but hey, at least you didn't get bit by the shark! Have you been out fishing again since this time?

My Time Capsule

I would put in the time capsule a picture of my lady and a 40o. But it will be empty because I would drink it all up.

I'll also put a CD of my music, a liter and swisher's, more beer, a nickel, a pic of me, another beer, a coke, hot cheetos, more beer and beer plus beer, and McDonald's.

-Alex

From The Beat: We see a common theme in your writing! How much do you drink, exactly? And also – to keep it real – how much trouble have you gotten into from beer? Alchohol can seem like a friend and turn out to be an enemy, it makes you do things that can screw up your life. Do any of your beer stories have unhappy endings?

Cool Thangs In My Time Capsule

What I would put in my time capsule if I had one? I would put a lot of pictures and a lot of memorials like a Barry Bonds rookie card or a SuperNintendo.

In the future, they'll be like: "What's that? Oh my god!" And I'll laugh and give it to my grandsons and show them pictures of when I was 17 and stuff.

-Jorge

From The Beat: Wow, what a funny idea to think about your grandsons and what you will tell them about your time. Imagine what video games will be like then ... Maybe that would be a good topic for The Beat – what you would want your grandchildren to know about you.

Pictures in My Capsule

If I were making a time capsule I would put a picture of all my friends and family and my girlfriend.

-Michael

From The Beat: Would you also write a note to say who these people are and what they mean to you? And if you did, what would it say?

Thorough Breed

Thorough breed is what they call me and my homies
No surrender, no retreat 'cause we're ready for the smother
Lookin' out for one another like a son does his mother
And in this circle of love don't nothing' come between or go above us
Mind state is simple
No such thing as friends just loyalty to family
Outsider might think I'm crazy 'cause they don't understand me
Not even in your wildest dreams could you ever picture livin' a life like me
Or any of the other soldiers you could find on the street
Labeled a gang 'cause we holdin' down fort with the heat
Getting rid of trash like when a garbage truck sweeps
Reflection on my life and when people ask what you think
I respond what can I say, I come from thorough breed.

-Kastro

From The Beat: This is such a well-written explanation of what you've been through, but so long as you keep carrying those guns, you and your crew will continue to bring pain upon yourselves. There will be deaths and prison, fear, crying mothers – we know you feel strong loyalty to each other, but ask yourself: What have we brought each other, but struggle? Are we helping each other lift up, or are we bringing each other down? You say we don't understand. OK, try to help us understand how this is worth all the tears you now shed?

Angel

You're my Angel, my sun up in the sky.
We've been through hell and back together,
Why do you wanna leave me know?
Only you can ease my pain I feel
And wipe my tears away.
Won't you fly back home and make me whole again.

This song is by Dru Hill and it's called "Angel." and I've been listening to this song for many years. It reminds me of me and my ex-girl friend.

-Victor

From The Beat: Was she your true love... and is it true, was it hard to make yourself feel whole again after you broke up? Now that she's gone, do you have a new girl, new songs?

My mother is like the light of my heart. She makes me feel like I'm on top of the world.

Feels Like They Don't Love Me

What I never got from my parents is that they never loved me.

They say they do but it doesn't seem like they love me, at least my mom. Because she never comes to visit me or she never answer my phone calls, when I finally had a chance to talk to her I told her if she was coming to my court the next day, she said she had something else to do like to go to the dentist, so I think that's not saying I love you.

-Julio

From The Beat: We're so sorry to hear that you feel this way. The loneliness of lockdown is the worst part. Since you wrote this, have you had a chance to talk to your mom and let her know how you feel? Maybe it's other factors in her life, like work, other kids in the family, or maybe even it's just painful for her to see you in the system? Let us know, we're hoping for a happier ending to this.

I Never Got The Love

Something I always wanted from my parents but never got is love. Love is all everyone wanted but never got, except some people.

I wish I had that love 'cause I never got it when I was little. I didn't have a dad growing up, and my mom was never around so I was left with her friends and their kids and with them I wasn't loved I was just there for show, waiting for some sort of love.

But I never got it 'till I was a young teen.

Not by a parent, but by a young girl she showed me love and happiness and that was something I never felt before and we've been together for three and a half years.

But we just broke up for me being in here and my mom comes and tries to show love, but what I wanted years ago wasn't there no more and now I'm missing my girl and I want her back.

-Elmo

From The Beat: We hope you and your girl find each other again, but no matter how mad you might be at your mom, do you really feel like it's too late? She might have some really good reasons for why she wasn't able to be there for you when you were younger, and if you could forgive her, it might ease some of that loneliness inside!

No Fear, No Trust

Well let's see what I would put something in a time capsule I would put two things one I would put my fear 'cause in this world you can't have any fear!! People who have fear really don't make it in this world!! Only the wacky ones!! The other thing I would put is trust!! I bet you think "Why would you put trust!!"

Well let me tell you in this world you can't trust no one!! Yea you can trust all your homies but someday they are going to drop dimes!! Not all of them baby, none but there will be at least one!! Stay up!

-David

From The Beat: You and your homies live dangerous lives, where betrayal is always just around the corner. Cops lean on you to snitch, enemies spread lies, people overreact off pills and hate. Maybe it's the environment you live in that makes people untrustworthy. Have you ever thought that if you got out of the game, it might make it easier to put fear away, and pick up some trust?

Mother

When I was little, I never thought about things. Now that I'm gonna be 17 years old on Halloween, I think a lot about my family and I realize how much I miss my family and friends. Now, I realize how much I hurt my family and made them cry.

Now, I cry every time I see my mother and it hurts me inside. I feel like crying and crying. My love for my family is bigger then this world can ever be.

My family is the other half of me. When I'm with my family, I never want to let go. My family is more then I could image.

My mother is like the light of my heart. She makes me feel like I'm on top of the world.

Well, anyways, for all you – remember your mother will always be there for you. Blood is thicker then water, so never leave you mother's side 'cause your family and mother will always love you no matter what, until you die. So, keep your head up and stay strong. To all – much love and respect.

-Ronnie

From The Beat: What – besides getting older – was the big change that made you feel differently towards your family? How do you think this change in emotions is going to change your behavior when you get out?

Song Lyrics

My favorite lyrics are from two songs, called "Ghetto Ballin'" and "Cali Thuggin'". Both of them are sung by my favorite rapper, Speedy L. When he raps, he raps about struggling in the ghetto of northern California.

Speedy L passed away in July of 2003, with four children. It was a shock because he was one of my favorites and he put my hood on the map. So, much love to Speedy L. RIP, Speedy Loc. 9-29-78 to 6-13-03.

-Kasper

From The Beat: It's a tragedy when anybody dies, especially someone who's under thirty. Did his death have anything to do with the life he was into?

Brown, Proud And Beautiful

I'm just gettin' tired of people tryna judge us Latinos, just 'cause our skin is brown and we proud.

-Lil' Creeps

From The Beat: What assumptions do people make about your people and you, simply because you're Latinos?

I Smile When I Think About My People

Waking up in my room
First thought in my mind
Is putting a grip to my doom
But suddenly stop
'Cause thoughts about the fam, homies, girl
And I start to crack a smile
But stopped dead in my tracks
When I hear metal doors open
And I start feeling rage, madness
It ain't nothin'
'Cause to me
It's my everyday feeling

- Grims

From The Beat: Very good rap! It's great that you have your family, friends, lady to give you hope and your smile, and help you to cope the rest of the day. But how does your being in juvy affect your people, back home?

Slap

I would like to put that DBB slap from Juvenile and that Henny Mac and Obei Thizz song. It slap all day, ya feel me? All our songs DBB Pokemon.

-Jayleon

From The Beat: Jayleon, you forgot to write why you like those rappers and those particular raps. What about them touches your heart, your imagination?

Doing Some Hard Time

I'm in my room all day, doing some hard time
If y'all knew w'at I'm going through
Y'all would know what I'm gonna do
I have to be happy, even though I'm not
I'm like a broken down CD player
Knowing my family happy outside in the outs
I can't wait to get out and be united
With my family

-Oscar

From The Beat: We don't know what you're going through, nor what you're going to do when you're free again, so why don't you write more about both? Is your hard time making you wiser or more furious, or both? How can you take what you've learned by being locked up and apply it to forging a new, happy, legit life for yourself?

Borat

My favorite movie is Borat. I love Borat so much. It is the funniest movie ever. My favorite part is when he goes to the 'hood and try to act black, then goes to a hotel and say, "What up wit' it, Vanilla Face?" and "Skeet, Skeet, bang bang, ninja," and then get kicked out the hotel. I love Borat.

-Kasper

From The Beat: That is really funny, but for those of us who haven't seen Borat, can you explain why he goes to a 'hood and imitates a black man? What's he up to?

Lil' Wayne's Duffle Bag Boy

My favorite song that apply to me is Lil' Wayne' Duffle Bag Boy.

Say gone and get yo' money, Lil' Duffle Bag Boy
Say gone and get yo' money, Lil' Duffle Bag Boy
I ain't never ran from a ninja
And I sure ain't go' pick today to start runnin'

I think this song means something to me because everything Lil' Wayne says, it applies to my life, because I get money, I'ma duffle bag boy, and I ain't never ran from a ninja, and never would. Get money stay solid from ya boy, SB, straight out the Jung.

-Young Sb

From The Beat: Okay, you're a hustler out there in the streets, but now you're a hustler in Marin juvy, It doesn't sound like being arrested and locked up means a whole lot to you, and hasn't impressed you enough to get you to think of a new plan for your young life. So has hanging in juvy off and on now become part of your street strategy, something you just accept as part of the job?

The Streets Are Callin' Me

My mama prays
That I quit the life I lead
Damn, I try to change my ways
But the streets are callin' me
And I love her to death
But at the same time, I'm a soldier
Gotta put in work
To let those know
That they can't get over

-Oscar

From The Beat: You write that you love your mother to death, but it sounds like it's your life/death that's really on the line here, not hers. You know you're worrying her! What are you living for?

I Love You

Girl, I love you and you know that
The way you make me feel
When I see your smile
The good times that I have been wit' you
You know I love you
From the start 'til the end
You make my heart beat so fast
Every time our lips reminisce
I don't want it to end
And it gets better when I make love to you
And I know I have messed up and I'm sorry
Babe, but when I see you again
I'm gonna show what true love is

-Chepe

From The Beat: Nice, sweet love poem. Is having you gone really a burden to your new family? How do they manage without you? Why don't you send this tender poem to your lady?

If The Walls Could Talk....

I wouldn't be alone in my cell or thinking about suicide.
I wouldn't feel so ill, I wouldn't try and hide.
Someone to listen to my stories, so I don't have to hold them in
my head, and tell my outside memories.
My cell wouldn't be so plain, I wouldn't need a roommate.
I could forget about all the pain, he could tell me my fate
so I wouldn't be owned by the state.

- King Henry

From The Beat: If any thing know that there is always some one ready to listen to your stories, we at The Beat and all those that read it continue to enjoy the words from the Land of Enchantment.

Thinking Twos

I sit in my cell contemplating all of my crimes I did in my past life. As the days go by and time flies now I think two's, so I will never make the same mistake twice. I'm making on life, I'm doing what I got, and I never thought life could be so right.

- Manuel

From The Beat: Short and to the point, but you should be thinking about how to better your life not how not to get caught next time.

Suspect, Song Lyrics

The song that most relates to my life is from a rapper form my home town in Roswell, NM. His name is "Suspect" and the name of the song is "Pour some liquor to the concrete" 'cause he's talking about the people around me that passed away.

Not too long ago like my cousin who got shot at a party over dumb stuff and the fool that shot him got shot by one of my cousin's home boys.

Or a fool about 16 or so was going to fast and I guess lost control and hit a tree, and one like a kid was getting ranked in a gang and they killed him while jumping him in.

It just shows how crazy my life and town where I live is. It kinda makes you think about what some people are like and how the way you live affects you.

Like how I live on the outs every day I ran around my town with a gun. Getting shot at every week, it got so bad that at night I would sleep with a gun 'cause some nights I would wake up to gun shots, so I learned to be prepared and not get caught slipping like most people do.

- Robert

From the Beat: That's no way to live your life, always looking over your shoulder or sleeping with a gun under your pillow simply out of fear. Don't you think its time to change, so you don't have to live in fear of being shot or someone you love finding the same fate.

In Loving Memory

The memories I remember from my Grandpa. When he was alive, he was always there for me since I was born.

When I was little my mom and I lived in Las Vegas, NM, and when my mom had to go to school at Highland College, we would meet my Grandpa in Santa Fe. My Grandpa would pick me up and bring me back to Albuquerque.

My Grandpa would take me fishing every weekend; the best part was when we went to rooster fights.

In loving memory of my Grandpa.

- Shorty

From The Beat: It's always hard to deal with the death of a loved one. The best thing to do is hold to your memories, this will help you think of ways to better your self and your life.

Reap What You Sow

Let retribution come to all who don't believe
Let them atone to all their evil deeds
For no man nor women
Shall sin against what God has written
For it is said, seven plagues
Will descend upon who thinks they can deceive
Let them be taken down
With the sword of the righteous king
Let them be tormented for all eternity

- Malachi

From The Beat: As your title states "Reap what you sow" no deed goes unnoticed, with time one will have to pay for all the crimes and evil deeds one commits.

A Memorable Quote

When I was a young lad I hard a wise man say give diamonds and rubies, but not your soul give to the rich all if you may, but keep your fancy free let your spirit roam for all the days to come and forget the days that have past.

- Malachi

From The Beat: Well said, don't live for the past, but for the future that lies before you. Find your purpose and live for it to better your life and for the better of your future.

I'm Alright

If your reading this then I finally did it,
I'm sorry I didn't say goodbye there was no time.
Understand I was stressed
Livin' day to day was hard
but I gave it my best,
but there was nothin' left for me in this world
to convince me to stay.
Now I'm long gone away,
now don't you do that,
don't you start with tears
just remember all the time we spent over the years.
Never cry, never think bad of me,
what's done is done and that's the way it had to be.
Now that I'm gone and out of sight never worry about me,
I'm alright.
You only saw the outside,
never knew I was feelin',
now every day you lay in bed starin' at the ceiling,
I'm alive, but you don't see me no more.
You can fill your heart with memories and things from above,
every bodies got a purpose in life to survive, and when the sun rise, keep the drama at hand, but out of sight, and know that I'm alright, and if you forget, get the picture with the cord around my neck.
Can you handle that?
If you should die don't blame yourself and keep it locked inside.
I'm alright."

Song title: "I'm Alright." Artist: TWIZTID. That song means so much to me, with my dad's death, personal history and just my feelings being incarcerated in general that song takes me out of this world for the short time it takes to listen or sing to it.

- Psyclown

From The Beat: As the song says "every body's got a purpose in life to survive" just make sure you don't end up with "a cord around your neck". Live life to better yourself, and the ones you love.

I Miss My Mom

I miss you mom... I wanna be with you... I miss eating the good food you be making... I wanna tell you that I'm sorry for the times I got you mad... when I get out this group home I'ma be with you and my big bro's so we could be a happy family... when I see you next week I'ma give you a big hug... I miss you mom, love you always and forever... Late!!

-Grumpy

From The Beat: This is a very special piece that we hope your mom will be able to read when you receive this issue. You should ask us for an extra copy when we come to the workshops. If you were in your mother's shoes and you had a son who got locked up, what would you say to your son?

Look At My World

First of all, I wanna thank god for givin' me my breath. My family for having faith in me to stay in my program. And last but not least to my ninjas in jail.

Man, if only there would be no police it would be a vacation. I would still be chillin' on the block, my ninjas in jail would be happy as hell. My mom won't be hurt of seeing me in jail. Bein' in jail man does it feel like hell, this no vacation, 'cause we sit there stankin' 'cause the showers are fast. Before that I was jackin' fools, takin' shhh ninja I carry some tools. But this all happen too fast. I got pills to pop and 'shrooms to eat in, the shhh ain't funny when yo' pocket on E.

-Combo

From The Beat: Yeah from the way this sounds there will probably be no police before you decide to change your lifestyle. Which is unfortunate because it's as if you have no control over your situation. Are you a leader or a follower? Would a leader point the blame at everyone else, jail and the police, or would a leader be responsible for his own actions?

If I Was My Biggest Emotion

If I was my biggest emotion I would describe myself like a big time bomb! All my feelings getting together but don't get released they stay hidden. I'm a mystery that you don't know what to expect when the bomb goes off my emotion is pain suffering hatred lies, is every worst thing that anybody can imagine it is something unexpected...

-JD

From The Beat: Damn, that sounds like anger... What do you do to release this in ways that don't get you into trouble? Has your emotions gotten you into situations you didn't want to be in?

Changing Facilities

Man, right now I'm stressing hard because I'm 'bout to be 18 and my P.O. is talking about moving me to the adult facilities. I don't know what to expect because my court date is coming soon and I don't know. The staff here are thinking about shutting down the house and I don't think that's right because most of the new kids have been going bad and they might get discharged.

This program is hecka easy I've been here for 2 months and now it's time for me to finish strong so I can get out and live my life. This program has staff that know people who can get clients far if they want the help. They just want to help the clients, clients need to be cool before it goes all bad for everybody. The new ninjas think they run shhh but they don't. So yea, aite then beat.

-Serg

From The Beat: There's always those few people that mess it up for everyone else. When you say, "so I can get out and live my life," what do you mean? How do you want to live your life? Are you going back to your old ways or will you try something new?

My Life

My life is full of mystery
Full of pain, blood and tears
Can't nothing work for me in my
Life, everything goes from good
to bad, for example when I tried
to do good like go to school,
go work and show respect
to people, but it seems that
when I was doing that
many people didn't like
that. For example my friends
they always expected me to go
with them and do things with them.
And if I didn't do it they would
Start to hate, and at the time
I didn't want to lose my friends
So I did what I did and ended
Up in a situation that ended
Me in a bad place... lost everything

-JD

From The Beat: Well, at least you're able to look back on it now and see where you might've went wrong. Do you think the mistakes you made in the past will help you pursue a brighter future? How so?

Thinkin' Outside The Box

The sight of the city and the sound of the streets makes me think out the box. My mind travels to them long days on the block I remember ninja. How I went from a little to a lot I remember ninja. We don't get to use the phone at the grouper so I wonder all day about what's poppin' on da outs.

-Joseph

From The Beat: You can't use the phone the whole time you're there, or can you use it once you've been there for a while? Does the block miss you as much as you miss it?

I Wake Up Thinking

I wake up thinking, that I'm in yo' bed
Feelin' yo' touch, and smellin' yo' scent
Hearin' yo' voice, and kissin' yo' neck

In about three seconds, reality hits me...

I wake up thinking, that I'm in peace
Restin' my head, body, and feet
Completely relaxed, entirely free

In about three seconds, reality hits me...

I wake up thinking, that I'm with you
Not a care in the world and nothin' to lose
Nothin' to owe, and nothin' to prove

In about three seconds, reality hits me...

I wake up thinkin' you holdin' me close
That I'm with the one who loves me the most
Who sticks by my side when other ones don't

I count these seconds as blessings, god gives me

-J Bang

From The Beat: It sounds like you think about this young lady a whole lot. Does she write you? Do you write her? Have you sent this to her yet? What do you think she'll say when she sees it published in The Beat?

Fight Anyone I Didn't Like

The worst advice I've ever been given that I took was to fight anyone who I didn't like. The advice messed me up because for a long time I thought that was the only way to solve problems and differences.

Now I can see that fighting isn't how you solve problems. The only thing that can come from fighting is getting hurt or getting locked up if you get caught. It is some good things that can happen. I'm not gonna lie, you get respect. But when it's all over there's more bad than good.

-Lil' Tigga

From The Beat: It's great that you're able to see both sides of the coin, the positive and negative effects of fighting because not a lot of people can do that. Have you ever fought someone you didn't like and they became your friend afterwards? Or have you ever fought one of your friends? Great thoughts...

All Pictures

If I was making a time capsule I would put all pictures, memories of the present so that the people from the future when they dig it out they would know how we lived what it was like way back, the streets our clothes, our music, our culture, our life. So that they see what was our generation like before they came...

-JD

From The Beat: Exactly what would be on the pictures? We think you have a good idea about why you would put certain things in your time capsule, but we would've enjoyed the piece more if you were more detailed about what you'd put in.

Get Life Together

Today I went to go look for jobs and I was excited because they got me here at the Walden House doing nothing. I only go to City College on Thursdays but today I went to go look for jobs and I met a new friend that will hook me up with a good job.

Then we went to the DMV to get my L's so I can drive and when I got there I seen my patna and he just got his L's. Then I felt proud about what my future looks like with all the people and support I have on my side.

-Serg

From The Beat: It sounds like you're really preparing yourself for freedom this time around. We can't help but think of the saying, "It's not what you know, but who you know," because it couldn't ring more true than in your situation right now. What's your dream job? What are you studying at City College? Keep up the great work... We're proud of you too.

The Wifey Tour

My dream vacation is to take my wifey and my family to Miami and just chill on the beach. And go to Miami INK and go finish getting tatted up. And go site seein'.

Then leave there and go to Atlanta to get wit' some of them lil' females. I'ma be wit' my girl but I ain't trippin'. What could I say I'm Young Spillz. Then hit up the Caribbean Island and chill at the lil' spot for a minute.

Then the last stop gone be Plaza east western addition and that's gone be my home. So yea dats my dream vacation matter fact that's my future right there yo! So yea I'm out Beat see y'all we I get back from the Caribbean Island. Oh yea, free my lil bra.

-Young Spillz

From The Beat: It seems like you thought about this before we even came up with it as a topic. And we think you picked some spectacular cities to go visit. Have you heard that in Atlanta there's an underground mall? Maybe if you get a chance to go out there you can take your wifey. How does she feel about you getting at girls while she's around?

Decisions

A day I took a bad choice was on August 26, 2006 when I was with my young patna "Goldi," it was late at night when he was asking me if I wanted to pull an all niter and I told him yup and we also had a stolen Camry. So we had all of our patnas deep in the Camry then it started getting later and my patnas wanted to go home so we went to drop them off.

So then it's like one in the morning and we ain't doing shhh but posted on the block but then I was getting tired so then my young patna was trying to find somewhere to sleep because I wasn't going to let him sleep by himself in the car. But after a while I was like forget it come on we pulling an all niter.

So I was driving and we were hungry so we headed to go to IHOP in Daly City. Then we were going there when a police car pulled behind us. So then I tried to make hella turns so we can get it off our back. Then he blurped us but my bad decision was to take them on one in Daly City. Then I got caught and then I missed my sister's quinceañera, I was mad.

-Serg

From The Beat: Damn, it sounds like you paid a price for being a good friend. Does your patna appreciate what you went through just so he wouldn't be lonely? Sometimes when we have the best intentions, the worst things happen to us. Was there a lesson learned in all of this? What did your sister say about missing her quinceañera?

Destiny

I don't believe in destiny
Life is what you make it
Kiss it sweetly fully dressed
Or hit that shhh naked

If you choose to go in raw
Your subject to the outcome
Life with what you come out with
And don't ask her how come

It's gritty, but its city life
What I've been born into
You'll never catch me hurting
Only bleeding from this pencil

-J

From The Beat: You have a great way with words and we enjoyed the personification of life as a woman. So, you really don't believe in destiny and think that all of our lives is what we make it? But if you've been born into it, isn't that sort of a destiny in itself?

Something I Always Wanted From My Parents But Never Got

I always wanted my parents to stop fighting and arguing. My father would always come home drunk and start fighting with my mother. There was one time when I told my father to stop fighting with my mother and he looked at me and hit me. I never understood why he always come home mad, I kept asking him and telling him to stop but he wouldn't and everything ended in a bad situation that my parents separated but I think it was for the best. I see my father and our relationship is well... getting better.

-JD

From The Beat: It must be difficult to grow up in a household where your parents are fighting. It's nice to hear that your relationship with your father got better. What do you and your father do together when you see him? Do you think that sometimes it's best when people go their separate ways in order to cause each other less stress?

Detained

I woke up this morning,
To a different kinda scene
A different kinda block
Wit' some different kinda fiends
If you tryna figure out what,
What you reading means
It's my own lil' beat
That's within unit three
I do the things staff
Tell me to do
Eat, sleep, shower
Don't learn shhh up in school
To everybody else
I considered a fool
But a real ninja will
Neva snitch on his goons

-J

From The Beat: This is an amazing poem that really maps out how weak it must be to spend your time incarcerated. Knowing what you know now, how can you make sure to never get locked up again? Do you think you'll even be able to not get locked up? We do...

Stop Snitching

One of worst advice I ever took was to help my friend rob some white dude. At first I was like it sounds like a good idea come up on some quick money. Three of my friends was down to help me. We got dude for what he had. Thirty minutes later we got stopped by police. We got taken to the station one of my so called friends snitched on me so he wouldn't do time.

After he snitched, me and my other 2 friends went to the halls for a quick minute. When I got out he tried to act like it was all good. Dam that was one of the worst mistakes I ever did. This decision wasn't worth it. Nothing good came out of it, all it did was put me on probation. I did this so I could get some quick money but it didn't work. This affected the family because they had found out that their son was robbing people and that he got locked up.

My advice to those that read this is to choose your friends closely, because they might play you. To avoid doing time. Wassup to the homey that's back in YGC.

-Stick Up Kid

From The Beat: Damn, this is a sad tale that we hear way too often — how we think people are our friends but then when it comes down to it, they really aren't. Do you think you'll be robbing people when you get out this time? What will you do differently so that you don't have to go to places like Walden House anymore?

You Make Me Happy

You make me happy babe...
Every time you cross my mind...
I get real happy and I feel good...
I feel like I got everything...
When you around me makes my day
A good day...
I wish we could be together...
With no one telling us that
We can't talk or be together...
I love you for what you done...
Thank you baby because you
Make me happy and you
Make my day mija fo' reals...
For all you foo's that think
Being locked up is cool y'all
Trippin' being with your love
Ones is was up fil-me...

-Grumpy

From The Beat: You are so right... Being locked up ain't cool and being with your loved ones is what's up. Now that you've had time away from your loved ones, does it make you appreciate them even more? How will you make sure, knowing what you know now, to never put yourself in a situation where you could be taken away from your loved ones?

No More Tears

The first time I seen you girl I just couldn't believe someone
As beautiful like you would be looking at me
So we started talking, started dating,
Now I'm glad cause you my lady
And I know that things are crazy.
Had our options that's why I'm saying that I love you so much
You're the only one in this world that I wanna trust
With my heart and my soul
With these feelings that I hold
About you inside of me to the day I gotta go
And when I do I hope you don't cry too much
Just know I'm still here for you cause we'll always be in touch
No matter what I'll be up in your dreams
I'll be watching over you all day 'til you go to sleep
But for now right here by your side
Even though sometimes we fight we argue
We ain't perfect but I know the things will be alright
So dry your eyes don't cry no more tears
No need for you to worry cause for you I'm always here...

Chorus — No more tears no more fear
No more fights no more lying
It's okay it's alright just your love in my life...

But it hurts me so much to see your face when your sad
But don't trip let's reminisce about the good times we had
But not the bad
See I'm sorry for what's happened in the past
And you know I forgive you so lets try to make this relationship last
Mo more tears, no more fear, no more lying, no more fighting,
No more crying, no more hiding from the pain
Just let it out once more cause for now on baby is gonna be okay
So lets start over again like we barely met
And I remember that day and I'ma never forget
'Cause when I looked at you looked at me
I knew that we were meant to be
Happy together forever for eternity
So I dedicate to you this song
To let you know that I'm trying put some effort
So that we could stay strong
'Cause I'm tired seen tires falling from your eyes
'Cause I really care about you and that ain't no lie...

-Grumpy

From The Beat: This is a very sweet poem and we hope you'll also send it to the person you're writing it to. Is she staying faithful to you while you're incarcerated? Did you show her this much love when you were out with her? Well, hopefully you'll do what you need to do to get back to her and stay with her because being locked up can be hard on a relationship.

Trust

Something that I always wanted from my parents is trust. My mom has never trusted me because every time I would want to go somewhere she wouldn't let me and I would always go ask her why. She would always tell me that she never trusted me. I would feel sad when she told me that.

-Serg

From The Beat: Did you do something to break her trust? What do you think you can do to gain it back?

El Peor Día

Cuando me agarro la policia, fue el peor día para mí porque ese día estaba cumpliendo años mi papa. Eso fue lo que más me dolio, que no pude hablar con él.

Ahora estoy aqui encerrado y no sé cuando voy a salir de aqui . Yo tengo fe en Dios que me va a dar la fuerzas para soportar todo lo que venga y ayudarme a salir de aqui.

Un día de la semana posada, fui a corte y me dijeron que no iba a salir hasta el 16 de Julio. No me gusto que me castiguen por algo que no hice.

Ya no quiero volver a la juvenil porque no me gusta estar aqui. Voy a empezar a pensar con la cabeza mejor. Voy a tratar de trabajar bien duro para no volver a caer preso de nuevo.

Los peores dias de estar encerrado son cuando no nos dan buena comida. Aveces me dan bien poquito y me quedo con mucha hambre.

Cuando me castigan, me pongo triste porque me la paso todo el día en el cuarto y solo miro a mis amigos afuera.

From The Beat: Nos imaginamo la gran lástima y el pesar que sintieron los dos ese día que debió haber sido un día especial lo cual no lo fue. Para los padres, lo peor que le puede pasar es ver a sus hijos en malos pasos o en malas situationes. Ahora ya sabes lo que es este lugar, el dolor y los problemas que traen las cosas negativas. Esperamos que realmente hayas aprendido mucho de esta experiencia. ¿Ahora cuales son tus planes cuando salgas de aqui?

My Worst Day

When the police caught me, it was the worst day for me because that day was my dad's birthday. That's was what hurt me the most, the fact that I didn't even talked to him.

Now here I am locked up, not knowing when I'm going to get out. I have faith in God that he will give me the strength to go through everything that may come and help me get out of here.

One day of last week, I went to court and they told me that I was going to get out in June 16th. I didn't like the punishment they gave me for something I didn't do.

I don't want to come back to juvenile hall, because I don't like it here. I'm going to start thinking with my head. I'm going to try to work as hard as I can, so I won't end up in here again.

The worst days in here is when they don't give us good food. Sometimes they give me a little bit and leave me starving. When they punish me, I get sad because I spend the whole day in my room seeing my friends in the recreational area.

-Selvin, San Francisco

From The Beat: We can imagine the pain and depression that both of you had that day, a day which could have been special. The worst thing that can happen to parents is to see their children in bad paths or in bad situations. Now you know how it is to be in this place, the pain, and problems it brings to our lives and those who love us. We hope you to learn from this experience and always what can happen when playing with fire. Now, what are your plans once getting out of here?

Las Drogas

Consumir droga es como darle alojamiento a un asesino que esta en nuestro cuerpo. Aunque duerma, algun dia despertara.

From The Beat: Buen punto y bien sabio! ¿Qué te hizo escribir esto?

Drugs

To use drugs is to allow a killer to grow up inside our bodies. Even if it sleeps, some day it will wake up.

-Martinez, San Francisco

From The Beat: Good and very wise point! What made you write this?

Las Pandillas

Lo que logras en estar en pandillas es que las personas te tengan miedo y aprendes cosas que solo te traen problemas. Cuando cometes crimenes, te metes en muchos problemas como ir a la cárcel o pasar el resto de tu vida preso.

También te metes en drogas y las drogas solo te traen destrucción. Date cuenta que cuando te metes en una padilla ya no te puedes salir.

El día más maravillos para mí fue cuando conoci a mi novia y me enamoré de ella.

From The Beat: ¿Eres parte de alguna Padilla? Estas hablando por experiencia propia? Esperemos que tu manera de pensar sobre este conflicto de ayude a mantenerte alejado de ellas. Gracias por tus palabras. Son apreciadas!

Gangs

What you gain by being in a gang is people fearing you and you learn things that bring problems. When you commit crimes, you get into a lot of problems like going to jail or spending the rest of your days locked up. You also get into drugs and drugs only bring destruction.

You need to realize that if you going a gang, you may not be able to get out.

The most beautiful day was when I met my girl and when I fell in love with her.

-Naron, San Francisco

From The Beat: Are you part of a gang? Are you speaking from experience? If not, we hope the way you view this issue help you stay away from them. Thank your words. They're appreciable!

Me Gustaria Que Hablaran

Si las paredes pudieran hablar, no me sintiera solo porque tubiera a unas cuantas amigos con quien hablar. Solo ellas saben lo que he llorado, solo ellas saben mi sufrimiento, lo que anelo.

Si ellas pudieran hablar, tubiera con quien desahogarme.

Ellas son mis amigas. Con ella hablo, pero nunca me contestan. Quisiera ser una pared para nunca llorar y para no tener sufrimientos.

Si las paredes hablaran les pidiera que me dieran la libertad, que se hicieran un ollo para poder salir.

From The Beat: Sería genial que pudieran esucharte y hablarte cuanso hables sobres tus sentimientos. Pero sabes que, nosotros tes estamos escuchando y respondiendote. Te tenemos la espalda. Gracias por escribir! ¡Estamos escuchando!

I Would Love If They Could Talk

If walls could talk, I wouldn't feel alone. Only them know how much I have cried, about my suffering, and what I desire. If they could talk, I would have something to release my feelings with.

They are my friends. I talk to them, but they never talk back. I wish I were a walk, so I can never cry and not suffer.

If they could talk, I would ask them to let me free, to make a hole in them so I can get out.

-Walter, San Francisco

From The Beat: We are sure that it would fun to have them listen to your feelings and be able to talk back. But you know what, we are listening to you and responding you back. We got your back. Thanks for writing! We're listening!

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Piece By Piece

Looking in da mirror what do I see?
A scared lil' girl
Dat has been very deeply hurt
She never tried to do the whole suicide scheme
Used and abused drugs
Da streets were her medicine
Where she chose to look for love
Never prostituted but poisoned others
She soon became a drug supplier
So much pain I bet you cannot see
I carry dis weak-ass smile
And refuse to let you see
In reality I'm falling apart
Piece by piece
I get high so I won't have to face dis
I'm confused
I got someone who wants to care
And I feel like I'm stuck
If I go left I walk into a sharp blade
If I turn right my heart starts to bleed
I'm hurt... I bet you didn't know
Dat inside I carry all these crazy emotions
I'm emotionally numb
Dis might not relate
So it will sound dumb.

-Giggles

From The Beat: The pain you're carrying proves that you are far from emotionally numb. Your emotions come through loud and clear through your fine poetry. Don't let the mistakes you've made in the past keep you from moving forward with your life, acknowledging both the bad and the good. Maybe you should walk neither to the left or the right, but straight ahead. You have some obvious gifts of self-analysis, honesty and writing talent, which reveal not only a first-class brain but a bruised, yet vibrant, heart. Those are gifts that can take you far if you allow them to.

Thank God

Thank God. My life has been crazy. Got jumped into the barrio. Now I'm gang banging, just putting it down for the 'hood I grew in. I been jumped, shot at and been hit with bats and bottles but I'm still down for my 'hood and I'm still alive. All I do is:

Thank God.

I been in love, sprung, and heart broken, but I still keep my head up and I know that one day I'll meet the girl of my dreams, a good looking, brown Aztec queen with beautiful eyes and a sexy face. She will be my wife for the rest of my life. So all I do is:

Thank God.

My homies passed away, now I'm at their funerals asking the Lord why he took them if their families need them here with them. Then the most beautiful thing happened to me. I saw the jaina of my dreams. She looked just like I wanted her to look, firme.

Thank God.

We started to talk, know each other better. Went out on our first day. I can't forget that day. It was a special day for me. When we went out to the movies, she looked hella fine. Her lips, her face and her body drove this vato crazy. Thank God for making that jaina my wife and my lil' moritos mom.

Gracias Dios mio. I Love you Linda.

-Lil' Stranger

From The Beat: Looks like you have a lot to be thankful for and some very positive reasons—the fact that you have a family, a girl you love, and a son as well as the fact that you're alive. Now, to honor the God you are thanking, stay out of the game and out of the Hall.

You Made Me

Crazy shhh!. I gotta put in work for what I was raised into.
I gotta work for what you gave me.
You saying I'm a criminal when you made me.
They got me trapped in this slavery.
Now I'm lost in this holocaust headin' for my grave.
If you wonder why I'm mad, check my record.
What does a homie have to do to get respected?
Sometimes I think I'm getting tested,
but if I don't say yes, homie's quick to get arrested.
That's the reason why you get tested.
Walking around 'bout to light it up
because my life is messed up.
So I'm slightly nuts.
They make a homie be a killa, but they wonder who the real Gs are!
Enemies that don't even know me wanna kill me
but I wonder if they ever heard of me.
I need fade to stay true to my game so I'm doin' what I do.
So don't say shhh until you walk in my shoes.
There was no other destiny to choose.
I had nothing else to lose, so that's why I'm saying this.
I gang bang because this is what I was raised to do.
New shoes, new clothes, what can a homie do?
Why must we take flight to live large?
Did you ever stop to think I'm old enough to mob around
but I ain't old enough to drink?
Cops wanna' hit me with the book.
You make rules but you hooked on my model. Stuck, I don't give a. . .
You make rules but I'ma break them.
Don't matter how much you make 'em.
You shouldn't make 'em.
I'ma take them. I'm cool. . .
This is to my homies in the pen.
Soon will I see you. . .
You live worse than the homies in the ghetto
but homies got love in my section.
You got problems from the punk police. Don't run from the chumps.
We ain't free. I'll be damned if I was, but forget snitch
RIP to a homie with a cellular phone,
leave his baby at home
So he can go out an' bone
An' you wonder why we testin' homies.
You fools havin' babies can't raise them.
Then they bound drinkin' 40's and gang bangin'.
Why do I bang? Because my heart told me to.
Why did I gang bang? Because I was raised that way. . .
Now I'm headed to the pen.

-Rambo

From The Beat: There is a lot of reality in this long and powerful poem, Rambo, but there is also a lot of self-justifying. Even if conditions and realities you had nothing to do with prepped you to gang bang — and even if the so-called good people do worse things than you — that does not end the discussion. Many people are raised a certain way but, as they leave childhood and become independent adults, they question how they were raised. For example, some people reject the religion they were raised in to follow a different faith (or no faith at all). Sometimes, we think you are applying one set of standards to the world (those who want to kill you but don't even know you) but a different set to yourself (don't you have people you want to kill that you don't even know?) You have accepted the "reality" of a future life in prison without actually having experienced that "reality" — meaning, to us, that you're mixing up your belief about what is real with what is actually real. This is what we see in you: An extremely bright, well-spoken and well-written young man who is going slightly crazy by trying to balance the world you've been handed and forced to adapt to with the world as you'd like to see it. We greatly admire your skills, but wish they would take you in a different direction.

PIECES • OF • THE • WEEK

Samurai Bushido

Samurai,
One who serves, indeed I serve,
But who do I serve?

A Lord?
No!
Myself?
No!

I serve those who cannot help themselves,
Like a knight of your fairy tales,
I live by a code of honor,
Bushido,
Honor is life,
There is no life without honor,
I cannot say I truly live by it,
Or even know it all,
But I live by honor and virtue,
Though I do not follow a written code,
I still live by one.

Unlike others, my code isn't written in stone
If I see an error,
I correct it,
Thus I improve near daily.

I have a code of conduct,
Do you,
Can you say you have a set of rules you live by?
And,
More importantly, do you really believe in your code?
Improve upon yours till you're satisfied,
Only then can you be at peace with your actions.

-Samurai

From The Beat: The Samurai of Japan lived by a rigid set of rules and codes that defined their conduct. They called that code Bushido and it governed their life and even death. When you get the chance, read "The Samurai" by Shusako Endo, A well known Japanese author who writes beautifully about the complications of Bushido, religion and life in general. While you've written this piece extremely well, we still wish you'd add some examples of how you lived before you adopted the Bushido Code to live by, and how that code will change your future behavior.

How Do My Moods Change Me

They change me every day, and it all depends how I feel. In Hillcrest my moods are pretty bad. They change me when I wake up in a little cell.

My moods change me by giving me anxiety at night when the door shuts behind me and I know I can't get out. My moods change me when I know I can't see or talk to my family. My moods change me when I know I will be away from my family for the rest of my teenage life. My moods change me when I think about all the heartache I have caused my family. My moods change when I think about not coming home for the holidays. My moods change when I think about the things I could be doing instead of being locked up.

-Weeds

From The Beat: This sad piece reads like the lamentation for the dead. But, Mr. Weeds, you are not dead! You are very much alive, even if lock-up can make you feel dead, sometimes. Everything you describe would affect our mood just as it affects yours. So we urge you to focus some time on the future when you will be able once again to take control of your life so that you can live it in a way that does not give your loved ones heartache and does not disappoint you. Make tomorrow different from yesterday, and we believe your moods will change in the same direction.

I just want to change
And never come back

The Mean Friend

I really don't have too many friends but I do have a mean friend. This friend is myself. I am mean to myself because I've gotten into too much trouble on behalf of my own behavior. For instance, I got myself stuck in juvenile because of the mean friend inside of me. He told me to go and do what I did. But at the same time, the good friend in me wasn't in my ear as much.

-Young B

From The Beat: Why does it seem so easy to give into the voice tempting us into trouble, while it's so difficult to listen to that voice that warns us of the consequences? How can your "good friend" confront your "mean friend" in order to keep you out of places like this?

My Fantasy

Coming off a straight daze
Where roses seem to always bloom
A world surrounded by pretty colors
Where there's no possibility of great pain
Wishing on an open star
Dat what I wish will someday come true
No room for any kind of hate
That will be da day when evil is gone
Defeated by the man up above
When couples will not cheat
When drug addicts hit rehab
When prostitutes stop selling their body
When killing stops
When drug dealers stop poisoning society
Sad thing is it may never come true…

-Giggles

From The Beat: Part of what makes your writing so effective is your ability to write about yourself and your experiences in a larger context of the world around you. You have a keen sense of observation, one that can help you succeed even through the difficult obstacles you have been (and will be) forced to overcome. We you're your fantasy. Have you ever thought about putting such a world onto paper to write a story (or a book) which takes place in the world of your imagination? We would read it! Please keep writing.

One More Chance

I'm tired of all this crap
I'm tired of coming back
I just want to change
And never come back
I know I made mistakes
But if I get one more chance
I'll show everyone that I can really change
I'm tired of seeing my mom cry
When she comes and says good-bye
This time when I get out
I'ma change, so it won't be good-bye
It will be, "I'll see you later tonight"
Being able to hug her all the time
Then I won't see her cry
Then I'ma see her happy all the time
I just want to change
And spend some family time
I just hope that I get one more chance.

-Nemo

From The Beat: You will get another chance. And when you do, we hope you follow through because you have the power to give your mom what she wants and what she deserves — you, home and safe with her.

Unchecked Emotions

My mood doesn't normally affect how I interact with people. Even if I'm angry, I can normally be nice to people and not get frustrated. Every once in a while I can be in a bad mood and someone might really make me angry and I'll do something stupid. That's only happened three or four times though.

I'm here because I was in a really bad mood and I hit a teacher. I really never show any emotions. I hide them from people. I guess I wanted to let out some anger. It was a really bad decision, but I can't change that now. In the future I'll just keep my feelings to myself.

-James

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing this with the Beat. Communication is essential. Everyone needs an emotional outlet. Talking and sharing your feelings with someone you trust can only help you deal with life in a calmer, more though out manner. In other words, we don't think you really made a decision to hit that teacher because you didn't take the time to think about consequences. You just reacted. Now it's time to think about ways to act, and not to react...

Whatever happens,
it is by the will of God,
It cannot be avoided,
This I know
So I do not fight it,
I accept it,
And move on.
In this way I survive,
I survive for the better,
I grow each time.

Acceptance

Will you accept whatever comes?
I will
I live knowing I do not control destiny
What has been pre-ordained,
Will come to pass.

Whatever happens, it is by the will of God,
It cannot be avoided,
This I know
So I do not fight it,
I accept it,
And move on.
In this way I survive,
I survive for the better,
I grow each time.

Do you grow as you experience?
Or are you stuck in a rut?
Only through growing,
Will you be the person you want to be.

Praise be to God,
May all of us reach Him in our lifetime.

-Samurai

From The Beat: In a way, we find this contradicts your previous piece about living according to Bushido's Code. If everything is fixed and there's nothing you can do to change it, then what difference does it make what kind of code you choose to live by. Or, is it that you had no choice in the matter? As we've commented before, sometimes we think you're using your fine writing skills not to reveal who you are but to camouflage it. We're looking forward to a piece that tells us more about who you are, how you came to be who you are, who you hope to be, and how you plan to get there. In other words, as much as we like reading your philosophical pieces, we'd also like something a little more concrete as it relates to you, personally.

No Mean Friends

I don't have any "mean friends." Me and my friends make fun of each other, but it's not serious. I have never had a friend that treated me badly. I think people in business and politics that are bullies are popular because they demand respect. They are important, so people get out of their way.

-James

From The Beat: Some might say that respect needs to be earned. And bullies that climb to the heights of power often fall fast and hard.

Now That I'm Locked up

I changed since I been here. Now I read more of the Bible, workout more, and do a lot of writing to my girl. I never wrote a letter and sent it before. And to get a letter from her felt cool too. I care more and miss the people I know, I love and know.

Now when I get out, I'ma' try my hardest to not come back here. All that old stuff I used to do, I ain't gonna be doin' too much of that when I get out.

-Ethan

From The Beat: Keep writing those letters Ethan, even when you get back home. Write to your girl, your friends and to the Beat. The writing may help you keep focused on staying out of trouble. And be very careful about that not too "too much" of what got you in trouble. Experience tells us that "a little" leads to more, and then to more, and finally you're right back where you started. Don't fall into that trap!

Back In The Days

I remember back in the days when me and the homies were acting like some fools. Drinkin' was all we did, bein a mocoso, always getting in trouble... goin' to kickbacks, parties, BBQs, tryin' to have some fun...

All the fun I had is gone. I got caught up for putting in work. Now, I'm doin' a year in boot camp. I gots to sav it out and be prepared for the future. Hopefully everything goes well for me...

-Demon

From The Beat: Now it's time to really put in some work — working on how to redefine "fun," and how to prepare yourself to get an education and make a life that does not include handing away your freedom. We wish you the best at boot camp, and encourage you to keep writing the Beat if you can. Let us know what things are like. A lot of our readers who may be facing boot camps in their future can only benefit from your insights and experiences.

What Is A Friend?

What is a friend? What I think a friend is, is a person that is somebody that has your back no matter what. He writes to you when you are locked up or helps you when you're in trouble. I used to believe that for a while, because I thought that one of my wanna-be homies used to say that he used to ride or die for me, and ever since I got locked up this time, that he would write to me and stuff like that. I've been here since June 1st and I haven't gotten a letter from him. So what I say to that is forget that fool. I don't believe no one, no more. Thanks Beat for letting me writing this piece. Late.

-Blondy

From The Beat: It must feel like your friend has turned his back on you now that you need him the most. But can we ask you a question... when you were on the outs, did you ever write to your homies who were locked up? The hard thing about being in jail is that life continues to move on the outside even as it stands still in here. But the real truth revealed by this is that your family is who stands by you through thick and thin. Think of what you owe them, and you'll see that it's not fair to keep hurting them by giving the system power to take you from them.

I've been here since June 1st and I haven't gotten a letter from him. So what I say to that is forget that fool. I don't believe no one, no more. Thanks Beat for letting me writing this piece. Late.

No Change

I haven't been here long enough to change much. I'm sure by the time I leave I will appreciate my life a lot more. I don't think I will change my personality or identity, I really like who I am and don't want to change.

-James

From The Beat: Your attitude may change if your lifestyle keeps getting you locked up. The consequences get more severe — as do the regrets. Change is a fact of life (all our lives). It's whether you direct the changes or wait for others to direct them that is at the heart of things.

Before I got locked up I trusted everyone. No one ever disrespected me ever and I never had to worry about being untrustworthy. I also thought people that swear to protect us would do that, and I looked up to them because they had character.

In This Cell

I've lost so many tears in this cell. I've shed so many tears. Vision in my eyes suicidal tentacles, just the miseries I've been thrown. God forgive me for my sins. Would I go to the pen or will my life end? I've tried to change but I'm livin' that dream as a gangsta! My heart is true to my 'hood. That's why I can't stop, won't stop, won't be stopped. I hold my head up high and represent to the fullest because I'm a rida. But I ask God to forgive me.

-Rambo

From The Beat: There is always something honest and moving in your writing, though it's surrounded by oaths of loyalty to your lifestyle and to the game (some of whose references we have to omit because they violate Beat policies). The sense of being caught between your lifestyle and the uncertainty of the future is well conveyed in your pieces. But can you tell us how you can be true to the values of your gang and to the values of your God? If you ask God to forgive you, it means you know you are doing things that violate God's laws. And if you know that, on what basis should God forgive you? These are just ideas to ponder... Your writing continues to get stronger, so we hope you continue to contribute to the Beat wherever you end up.

Due In Two Weeks

I'm locked up thinking about my nine-month-old boy and my unborn child. I'm nine months pregnant. In two weeks I'll be due. I can't wait to get out and be with my two boys and my family. But I have to do my time. I regret what I did. I wish I can go back and change my life but I can't. I have to stay here and do my time.

-Natalie

From the Beat: Now that you have two children, you have to think of them and not of yourself — which means, you have to stop doing whatever it was that let the system take you from your son! At the same time, you can let our readers know what it's like to be expecting when you're locked up. Break it down for us. What medical services can you access in the Hall? What happens to your newborn baby when you need to finish out a sentence? Who do you talk to about all of this? Who can you talk to?

My Son

I don't want my son to be like me when he grows up. I want him to be free. Hopefully, he is what I'm not. He will go to school and get an education. He could be someone in life, someone that his dad couldn't have been and that is to stay out and free.

-Macias

From The Beat: How will you make sure your son gets that education and a system of values that keeps him free? What do you think he needs most to succeed? How will you show him the way?

A Heart to Heart

I always wanted to be able to have a mother-to-son conversation with my mom. I feel like she is always talking at me instead of talking to me. I feel like she doesn't understand where I'm coming from at times. Even though she doesn't want me in the streets, and yet I still go. I feel like she should at least try a little harder to keep me out of the streets.

-Lil' Phil

From the Beat: It might be up to you take the lead and develop that kind of communication with your mother, even though you wish it were the other way. It might take time and patience, but if the payoff could be great. What a challenge it would be to her if you could tell her that you wish she tried a little harder to keep you off the streets, and that you're going to keep yourself off the streets because you're in charge of your life.

My Mood Changed When...?

My mood changes whenever. I don't know why but it does. I can be happy at one point then mad at the next. Sometimes it changes and it makes me think. I sometimes ask myself what makes this happen, but I never find the answer.

-Stewi

From The Beat: If this is really a serious problem for you, it may be organic and not merely psychological, meaning you may have a chemical imbalance in your brain. You could ask your doctor about that possibility, but in the meantime, keep questioning and look to the elders around you to help you find some answers.

Trust

Before I got locked up I trusted everyone. No one ever disrespected me ever and I never had to worry about being untrustworthy. I also thought people that swear to protect us would do that, and I looked up to them because they had character.

My untrustworthy day started out with me drinking for some reason. I called for a designated driver and everything was cool, but something went bad. We returned to the scene to pick my cell phone up because I forgot it. My friend couldn't find the phone so I brought my drunk self out and then decided to forget it and then sat on the curb.

5-0 came and started asking me questions. I thought everything was going to be ok. I trusted the cops. However, that didn't work out because when court came, the cops called a witness that lied to save their ass.

Now I'm locked up for following what we were taught in school.

-Justin

From The Beat: If you have described the situation honestly and accurately, it sounds to us that you truly were acting responsibly. Of course, getting drunk can always interfere with responsibility, but calling for a designated driver tells us that you were still thinking rationally. What we don't understand is what the cops or their witness said (lied?) about in court to put you here. Will this experience affect your future behavior and/or your relationship with the police?

Vision in my eyes suicidal tentacles, just the miseries I've been thrown. God forgive me for my sins. Would I go to the pen or will my life end?

Little Cousin, Stay up

First, I want to say, "Stay up little cousin because I don't want you to be like me." Because my cousin sees me as the oldest in the family, he wanted to follow in my footsteps and do everything I tried to do. I tried to stay out of trouble but things didn't work out for me. When I started to get into trouble, he started to get in trouble. I told him that his mom needs him more than ever. He didn't listen and a year later his mom passed away besides. The point, you won't miss someone till he's gone.

-Joshua

From the Beat: We all need to lead by example, Joshua, exactly because our younger siblings follow what we do and not what we say. That is our responsibility to the people we love and who love us in return.

When Anger Takes Over

My moods change me in many different ways. When I am mad I don't talk to anyone. I ignore everyone. I know that my anger takes over me. It takes control of me and I can't do anything about it. When I'm angry I flash on everyone no matter who it is. I know that I have to change that but it's hard. I need help. Hopefully someone can help me with my problem.

-Smokey

From The Beat: Thanks for being honest. Many people have anger problems (including us), so many people have thought about ways to gain self control. There are probably people and organizations in your community and your schools that can help you deal with the anger that stems from your mood swings. Tackle that problem head on before it tackles you.

No Comfort, No Crying

Something I wanted form my dad that I felt I never got was comfort. In my house it was not okay to cry, even if you're a girl. My dad always told me that crying is not going to change anything. Even to this day, when I want to cry, it doesn't feel right. So I try to hold it back. Now that I'm older I have people in my life that comfort me and that I cry in front of and feel safe and secure. I promised myself that when I have kids, comfort will be present and my kids will feel that it's okay to cry.

-Anonymous

From the Beat: We're not sure that crying doesn't change anything. It may be more harmful to keep those tears in rather than let them out. If you create a loving home for your children where they feel safe to cry in front of you, then maybe you can thank your dad for giving you the model to avoid.

In camp, it's not that bad like people say it is. You could play basketball, run track and all types of things. Camp is five to nine months, but if you do good you would go home on five months.

Do I Care

Something I never got from my parents was respect and sometimes love. But when I think about it, I really don't care because we are all in jail.

-Stewi

From the Beat: What do you mean, "we are all in jail?" And why does that lead you not to care?

Going to Camp

What's good with The Beat? Man, I'm sitting here just waitin' to go to court. They tryin' to send this kid to camp. but I'm not really trippin' off going to camp 'cause I look at it like I got some of my thugs doin' a year and more. But anyway, camps just six months, so I'm just gonna knock that time out like a big dog, ya' dig?

In camp, it's not that bad like people say it is. You could play basketball, run track and all types of things. Camp is five to nine months, but if you do good you would go home on five months. But that's what camp is like, so if you go you know it's not that bad. You also get home passes if you keep doin' good. Your first one is for two days and when you get that your time really goes by fast. But that's camp. I'm out. But I'm gonna' write ya' next time, Beat.

-Smoke B

From The Beat: Thanks for letting us know what to expect from camp. Five months at camp sounds a lot easier than years at YA or in the pen. In addition to the physical part of it (playing basketball, etc.), we hope you also use the time to prepare your mind for the future. Read as much as you can, and take your schooling seriously. Hope we hear from you again.

When your hero falls,
Your thoughts are undiscovered.
Then you're sleeping in a place
with black walls
As your heart is hurting because of a defect

Hero

When your hero falls,
Your thoughts are undiscovered.
Then you're sleeping in a place with black walls
As your heart is hurting because of a defect,
You tell yourself to try hard not to weep.
As your mind is on a rampage,
Your body if off-course.
Then you just forget and let go of your force.
Next thing you know you are blind as a bat,
Then you try to go back, but it is too late to react.
As you are full of hate, you become afraid of common fate.
As you cry, your heart becomes torn.
Then you're living your life with no form.

-Puluo

From The Beat: It's been a real pleasure for The Beat to be working with you Pulou. You write with so much sincerity and conviction. Good luck and stay in touch with us. You can write us from wherever you are, and we will always publish what you've written — in the Big Beat!

Why?

Why do people always think that they can do certain things, feel me?
Why?
I mean, I do the same thing and I know why I do it.
Why?
Do you look for love on da' streets? Man, you have to know when you find it, it will help.
Why?
Don't you try to just be true to yourself. I mean, shhh, stay true to the game… that and your path of life 'cause I do. I am at that point…
Crossroads.

-Mr.Kabb

From The Beat: To be honest, Mr. Kabb, we found this a little difficult to understand. We'd love for you to write a piece just about the crossroads you find yourself at, and which path you're going to walk down… and why.

My Life

Before I was locked up, my life was good, always chillin' with my friends all the time. But after what happened, I didn't trust anyone anymore. What happened was I was driving with no license and someone told my family about it.

When I get out of juvie I'm not gonna' chill with the people I used to chill with because before I was chillin' with them I was doing good. Then when I started chillin' with them, I was put into lots of trouble.

-Darryl

From The Beat: We think it's a wise decision you're making not to chill with those that have led you into trouble. But if you're truly wise, you won't drive without a license, because that's a prescription for putting yourself into trouble — a prescription which you can't blame on anyone but yourself.

Mood Changes

Man, my mood changes me at a lot of points. I mean, when I get mad I block it out and I don't think about anything. I just act out how I feel. I mean I don't like to be put on da' spot. I am goin' to react real tough like, feel me? Change it up some time.

-Kabb

From The Beat: Do you think there are times and places where you can't just act out how you feel? When you do "just act out" how you feel, does it ever carry negative consequences for you? Don't you think its better to think before you react, especially if you're the one paying the price?

What They Think

They think I need help with my alcohol problem. The judge, my PO, the police. They think keeping me away from my mom, my lil' brother, and ma girl and my family on the streets is gonna help me stay safe, but am I really safe in here? They say it'll keep me away from da alcohol, but really keepin' me away from the people I love, the school, the fun I have out there.

The PO wants to send me to a placement, an AA placement, but I'm refusing everything. So I'm askin' to get out on EMP and let me do AA programs out there. What they say is, "We don't trust you out there. We don't think you can do it." So this what I say, "It's not what you think, it's what I think."

-Lil' Menace

From The Beat: Unfortunately, it's really not what you think, it's what they think. That's what happens when you hand your freedom over to the system. It means that what you think comes second to what they think. We don't believe that alcohol and drug abuse should be a criminal justice matter at all, but it doesn't much matter what we believe, because here we are, in the criminal justice system. We hope you get out on EMP, but even more than that, we hope you take your alcohol problem very seriously because it can destroy everything. Good luck!

Too Much Drama For Me

Chilling with the thugs and the drugs
Too much drama for me
Sitting in Juvie, getting into fights
Too much drama for me
All these people fiending for some drugs
Too young but wishing to be a thug
Too much drama for me
Got to get paid, hustling all day
Too much drama for me

-Dora the Explorer

From The Beat: Well, you can't have it both ways, Dora. If you "got to get paid by hustling all day," then you've got to expect the drama. When it's really too much drama for you, that's when it will stop.

Trust No One But God

I trust no one but God and only God.
God is there no matter where you're at.
If you trust in the Lord, He will show you the way.
Trust no one but God and only God.
I trust the Lord because he's there when I'm in need.
Love and trust him; He is your father.
Trust no one but God and only God.
God is the only one that will stay by your side.
Keep you lips from speaking lies.
And trust no one but God and only God.

-God's Child

From The Beat: What does it mean to you to "trust God"? Is "trust" the same as "respect"? We ask that question because we're confused about how someone who respects God as much as you do could end up in a place like this. Can you explain that paradox?

I'm askin' to get out on EMP and let me do AA programs out there. What they say is, "We don't trust you out there. We don't think you can do it." So this what I say, "It's not what you think, it's what I think."

I been on this road for a while now, about two years, not being able to go home to your mom and dad. When I go home there's no one there. And even sometimes I can't go home because I can't get in.

Who I Am

When I was young, I would always be careful and do right. But when they tried to put my brother in juvie for things he didn't commit on the block, I started not trusting that many people, especially the police and my brother's enemies. At the age of 11, I hanged with my brother's friends because my brother was in YGC. So his homies saw me as a lil' version of him. They taught me how never to be a punk and hate rival enemies and respect all da' blocks they named and took me to.

I talked to my mom on da phone last night and she told me that my lawyer and my PO said the DA wants me to do three years or ROP. So when I found that out, I decided that I was worser than my brother and need to change.

So I don't mean I won't put it down, but I'm jus' gonna' get my life straight at the same time. Live the words my cousin told me. I got some homies locked up with me in Juvie. When I get out, I gotta' make sure I don't come back.

-L Kidd

From The Beat: How do you plan on getting your life straight while planning to keep "putting it down"? Don't fall for the lie that you can just do a little with the homies, just a little of the old stuff, without facing the same consequences as before. You need to make a tough choice about what you want more, a life that you control by being free, or a life under the control of strangers.

Hate On Me

This is for people that love to hate.
If you don't hate, then don't read this.
Hate on me
Because you love to complain
Hate on me
Because I am doing better than you
Hate on me
Because at the end it is only words
Hate on me
Because it motivates me to do better
Hate on me
Because I got something you want
Hate on me
Because at the end of the day you will hate on someone else

-H

From The Beat: Are you free from hate? If not, what are the reasons that move you to hate?

The Beat Within

Giving a speech about who you are is very challenging. The reason is that there is so much stuff you know about and can talk about. Well, the person I am is like the people of this world look down on. Well, I'm the type that ends up in a place called jail and you're on your own because family is not there to help support you.

I been on this road for a while now, about two years, not being able to go home to your mom and dad. When I go home there's no one there. And even sometimes I can't go home because I can't get in. I just think I have to try my hardest and push it to the limit.

-Puluo

From The Beat: Don't make the Hall or the penitentiary your home, Pulou. There's always somebody "there," but you don't want to be among them. We're not sure you even appreciate your own strengths, but you have as much potential to succeed as the brightest college student, especially if you pursue your own education. We hope you'll begin to believe that when you give yourself the chance to succeed once you're back on the outs.

Together Forever

Dreaming about you
Every night and day,
Praying for you
In special righteous way

See you in my sparkled heart of visions
Breaking all the rules for spiritual missions

Sweetheart, you truly are so special
And so real
By the way you make people feel, I feel
Special too just by being with you

If more people in this world were more
Like you within,
It would be a much better place to
Live in

Please don't
Ever change

Just arrange
Go bless you in all ways
Through all days.

If more people in this world were more
Like you within,
It would be a much better place to
Live in

I'll Always Love You

The nicest feeling I've ever know
Is being in love with you, Jen.

Thank you for the memory of these feelings, Jen
For bringing me happiness
As though it were a gift,
I could open everyday
...I thank you—Jen

For listing the words I want to say
...I appreciate you—Jennifer.

For letting me share the most personal
Parts of your world and for welcoming
Me with those beautiful big green eyes
...I am truly grateful for you mija

For just being the wonderful, kind
Giving person you naturally are
...I'll always admire you, Jennifer

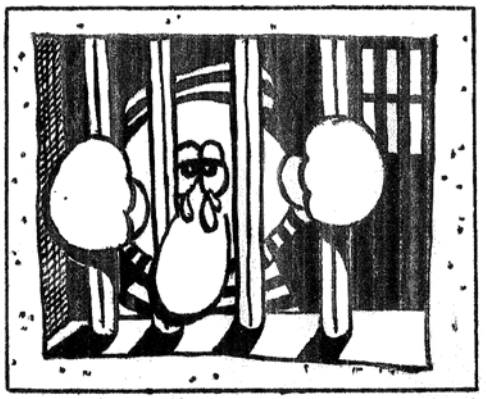
For being the most beautiful light
In my life
...I'll always desire you

For being everyone you once were
To me and for doing it so, "damn beautifully."
...I'll always love you.

Intimate emotional deprivation is such a difficult thing to deal with — so difficult, people who've never been locked up could never understand. Imagine living in the memory of a relationship while the other half of that relationship is moving on with their lives. Sometimes they also can be sustained by memories, but most of the time, distance is too much to handle and people find comfort in someone else. This fact is devastating for those who are incarcerated because we want so bad to have those feelings of being loved being they're so hard to get in jail. This next writer speaks of love quite often and we've explained our thoughts on why. But as he explains his feelings, you can tell he's not your ordinary lover. He really feels a deep passion for the one he loves and now it bleeds through our pages. We enjoy his writing and he sends it to us from a California State Prison in Chino, CA.

Life

Life is pain, for just a short gain,
Through the years, were drenched in tears,
People live and they die,
Some live longer with no reason why,
People take more than they give,
This is how some chose to live,
Peoples birthdays pass and go,
Rivers flourish from melting snow,
With every day that slowly fades,
A child is born and lost in play,
People learn so they can teach,
The stars are something kids dream to reach,
The wise share lessons with the youth,
Just as the ocean is deep and blue
Every day is filled with choices,
Distracting us with inner voices,
Right is wrong but bad is good,
This is easily understood,
When we fall we learn to rise,
Rocks are beaten by the ocean tides,
The birds they soar through the air,
Lost in tranquility without any care,
But what is life to you and me, is it a pool of tragedies,
Is it one big catastrophe or is it dedicated to your majesties
That creates land and the seven seas,
There is only one way we'll see,
Want to greet your destiny,
We all have a path laid ahead of us, but with each step we can trust,
We must wonder if it's the right direction,
We must separate truth from fiction,
After we travel through the loops and bends,
And we can see the inevitable end,
We must make the most important decision,
To keep going forward or just stop livin'



For Lovely

Pressed for hard time situations
As one, I am your gangsta no longer on the run
Feeling swayed towards my mija
And my dad, the two of you the only and most
Important thing in my life or else
My life forever sad, forever sad.

Bless you for
The pictures, bless you for the letter and bless
You my dear for beholding
Our precious son with deep comfort and care I
Know no one would have done
Better

Let realization reign and believe my soul
The fear of losing you the
Worst possible scenario of control
No more promises spoken
Promises broken

Keeping it real and honest
For oneness together, history forever
Lights now dim time to dream
Another dream, different yet hopeful outcome the same.
By your side as my bride walk down that
Aisle hand in hand, vows diligent
We'll make a courageous stand
Worry a contagious symptom
Faith reels happy time laughter never
Lonesome
Treasure life for place of security, comfort opportunity
Acceptance for simple
Comfort that silence brings when things left
Unspoken can still be
Understood

For you and Adyn I will go that extra mile
I truly would
A vision as one growing old with you
Watching proudly our
Son's life unfold respectfully and
Our dreams one by one come true
Thoughts of your patience
Our son experimenting growth maybe
Doing something that reminds
You of me can't wait to share
To be free
Jen don't you wish I was there
To hold dad when crying, a helping hand
When you're sighing
To close my arms around you when
You're honey a feeling of
Reassurance from me your only
Jen baby you're in my heart, you're in
My soul you make me complete and
Yearning to know, are you
Feelings still strong and real, can I
Still capture your appeal
Living together loving each other
Through good times and bad
Happy times and sad. By trust and faith
Through the lord up
Above relinquish all failed sequences
For passive manic love.

DARYL GRANT

This next writer pulls no punches... And although he's pretty straight forward in his writing, calling people on their character flaws, we have to admit he does have a point. There comes a time when every man must accept responsibility for their actions. Now, we're not saying the criminal "justice" system isn't a messed up one to deal with, but we are saying that we have the most influential role over our own lives. Other people are influences but we are the ultimate one. He's writing from Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA, and he makes that very obvious in his piece. Most may not agree with his approach, but he does have a real strong point.

To Whom It May Concern

I'm writing to let the young people know what it's like to be in prison. It's not cool, you be told what to do just like it is in juvie and any other lock up, you just do more time in prison.

I've been locked down thirty-three years, since I was nineteen. Jail and prison is no joke. Don't let people who never been to jail fool you. Think for yourself and try to do the right things.

By the way stop complaining about your little time. The kind of time you all do ain't nothing. Then why are you crying? Stop doing crime then you won't have to cry about your little time: there's no baby Pelican Bay. It's just one Pelican Bay State Prison, any way try to use common sense to make your decisions before you end up in prison with a life sentence.

Ok then, peace and respects

JOHN RICHARD BROWNE

Even though he lets it be known that this isn't something he wrote, we thought we should publish it because it has real meaning for him personally. And though we've heard it before, it's always liberating to know we aren't the only ones who want love while we're living rather than have people come out of the woodwork when we've passed away. It seems like people do that a lot, won't show someone love until they're dead. It's not right, but hey, like incarceration you don't know what good you hold until you've flung it away. Read on and don't fling away the thought of giving now rather than later. John Richard Browne writes us

Give Now

I would rather have one little rose
from the garden of a friend
Then to have choicest flowers
when my stay on Earth must end.
I would rather have one pleasant
word in kindness said to me,
Than flattery when my heart is still and life cease to be.
I would rather have a loving smile
from friends I know are true,
Then tears shed 'round my casket
when this world I bid adieu!!!!
Blossoms bring to me today, whether pink, white, or
reds, I'd rather have one blossom now,
than a truckload when I'm dead...
(I believe my mother was trying to tell me it was the end for her by sending me the above poem. (Author unknown)

To Be African

•DAVEY PIERRE•

We find some of the most intelligent people in the back of The Beat. Not only do they have the courage to step up to the pen and let their voices be heard, but they also speak about things we wouldn't normally thing about because our minds are to cluttered to fathom such well-thought ideas. In his piece this week Davey Pierre gives us some history about Africans and how they've been crippled, even now, by the horrendous experiences of slavery. It's not fair to strip a people out of their homeland in order to force them to help build a civilization that would turn their noses up at them any way. He writes to us from California State Prison in Corcoran, CA. And with every word do we see a man on a mission to better his people while everyone else seems to be counting his people out, including his own people. A hard task, but someone has to attempt it. And who better than a man who can lead with words as he does.

All people, all over the world, throughout history, have shared in common the fact that they belong to a culture of origin. That is a universal reality. Another equally important universal reality is that there are many, many different cultures in the world and each of them are unique.

The uniqueness of a culture is what gives special ness to its members. They bonded together by their shared culture, which gives them a sense of collective identity.

We are an African people, "simply reveals that there are values, traditions, and a heritage that we share because we have a common origin."

The cultural process is naturally an ongoing, which allows people to continuously affirm their connectedness through being linked to their origins.

However, the continuity of our cultural identity has been interrupted cruelly and unnaturally by the experience of slavery. We as people are still suffering from this great crime because we have not been allowed to find our way back to the sense of cultural identity and continuity, which would transform us into a unified and whole people. We have not been able to function in the world with a collective consciousness that naturally imparts a strong sense of cultural roots.

The term "Maafa", (from the book, "Let The Circle Be Unbroken), is a Mahili word for "disaster that we are void using to regain our right to tell our own story. "Maafa" refers to the enslavement of our people and to the sustained attempt to dehumanize us because the "Maafa" has disconnected us from our cultural origins. We have remained vulnerable in a social order that does not reflect our cultural identity. We are people of African ancestry living in denial of who we are. We have lost our strength as a people. We are losing our children to a system, which miseducates them. Our families are disintegrating before our eyes. Our numbers are growing in the statistics of drug addiction and incarceration.

Responsible, national, black organizations are seeking remedies for these problems, but we are not speaking with one voice. We need to work together as a family who supports its members and who is responsible for their welfare. We must use the most valuable asset that we have: that is the spirit of our people. It is that spirit that connects us to our African roots.

Slowly, we are awakening to the need to claim our cultural legacy. The term "Sankofa" from Akin tradition in Ghana, West Africa, tells us to return to the source so that we can go forward with strength and clarity. Culture is a powerful tool for inspiring human beings and bringing them together in a concerted "family" action.

Our cultural roots are the most ancient in the world. The spiritual concepts of our ancestors gave birth to religious thought. African people believe in the oneness of the African family through sacred time, which unites the past, the present, and the future.

We created the first civilizations thousands of years ago and they suffered the pain of the "Maafa", and yet they were able to endure the most disastrous and dehumanizing circumstances ever perpetrated against a group of people, only because of the power of the Afrikaan spirit. They did not have the freedom to affirm their cultural heritage. We now have that choice. In the Afrikaan view of life, it is our responsibility to honor their name.

This is perhaps our moment of truth. We must come together as a family. We must do all that we can do to uplift our people. Otherwise, we are still denying who we are and bringing dishonor to our "family name", to our ancestors. The answer to our social dilemma is the resocialization of our people into the culture value system that affirms our spiritual being. Our ancestors are calling us "home", back to our cultural selves. We must begin the process of Sankofa.

I really do hope that this paper of yours continues for a long time...

The Beat

•INSANE ONE•

Writing from the Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, CA, we bring you this next first time writer who's probably out when this finally gets published, but we want to thank him anyway. He quickly recognizes the power of The Beat and being that he's not only experienced what he's experienced, but he also has four children, we feel his opinion of our publication is more than credible. It's well respected and holds more weight than most opinions. We hope he got out, but if not, we will always consider publishing his work, so please don't hesitate to write.

Q-vo, this is the Insane One from Merced California. I just thought I'd write these few words to let you know that I think what you guys are doing over there is beautiful. I am currently incarcerated at DVI in Tracy, "Duel Vocational Institute." I am 34 years of age and a first termer, however this letter is not about me. I just wanted to express myself on a few things about your paper.

It's great that these youngsters have a way to express themselves in many positive ways. It doesn't matter if it's over a poem, short letter, or even some art. What is important is that they can get their point across. I have four children of my own and let me tell you, they sure grow up very fast. I haven't been around my kids all that much because of certain circumstances but I have never failed to let them know how much I truly love them. I'll be getting out of here in 2007 and I am looking forward to spending much time with my kids.

I really do hope that this paper of yours continues for a long time because these kids don't only have a way to express themselves but they also get very positive feedback on their art as well. Keep up the good work and let me just say thanks to everyone at The Beat Within including you many young artists. Keep your heads up and don't let anyone get you down.

-CLINT AVALOS-

Writing from San Quentin State Prison we bring you a father who's on a mission to express how he feels about us getting locked up when we have children. He first writes a poem, "For All Dads," giving the child's perspective of having an absent father. We thought this took a tremendous amount of compassion because he had to put himself in the shoes of his son in order to fully accomplish this poem. Brilliant... Then he concludes with a poem to all youngsters from his perspective of being a father. We couldn't have reflected the importance of having your father around the way he did, especially from two totally different angles. This is why we appreciate The Beat Without section because of writers like this...

This Is Dedicated To All The Youngsters From Your Dad

There will come a time in your life
When you will have to do some things or understand,
And sometimes there will be moments
Of wondering if "you really can?"
Doubts will come as they usually do
But be of good courage — it's nothing new.
At times you'll feel that nobody cares
But feelings come and go as the seasons and passing years.
You might have something to say that's really on your mind,
But decide to keep it to yourself
Because someone who will listen to you will be too hard to find.
Some nights will seem long and the days spent too fast
And you'll have to ask yourself "where'd it all go"
Because you wanted it to last.
You will see things going on in the world
That don't really make sense
It will push you to pray and make a wish.
Some will come just to laugh in your face,
But the true test will come when you shrug it off with seasoned grace. Friends will come and some friends will leave
But true friends stick together and help you dream.
It might seem like everybody but you gets all the luck
And everything's fine, but don't let it get to you
You just keep trying.
If you can't make up your mind what do you want to do?
Give it some time to think about it
Never rush into anything too soon!
Don't let anybody tell you that it cannot be done
It might not be as soon as you've expected,
But sooner or later, you'll have it won.
You know, dad doesn't have all the answers
And is always open to suggestion? So if you have something to say, don't bother to ask a question.
When the chips are down and you have no where to run, always count on me – I'm your dad and you are my son.

For All Dads

Don't tell me how much you love me,
Until you show me how much you care,
Don't say you're always going to be there,
But never be here.
Many times I've wished to wake up in the morning,
Just to see your face,
But get my hopes let down
Because you couldn't be found without a trace.
The many times I cried and shed all those tears;
Wishing that you'd be here to rid me of all my fears.
Sometimes it's hard being lonely
But not having anybody to confide in
Nobody that I could trust or count as a friend.
I only have this feeling that I carry in my heart,
The feeling that someday — a son and father will not depart
Sometimes the world seems cold and uncertain,
But I know where I'm going because I know where I've been.
I remember the moments that we used to have fun —
The movies the park,
And when you said, "On your mark, get set, ready, run."
Those times were great and I'll never forget,
But what about school, homework, or the time I was sick?
I still have those dreams, but dreams will never take the place of you They wash away with the tears and are too few.
I've learnt to rely and trust in my own instincts,
I try to be open and honest,
But at times I don't care what anybody thinks.
I didn't understand the times that you need to leave,
But as I'm a little older — I'm starting to see!
I look forward to the cards, letters. And what you have to say,
But most important — until the time you come home to stay.

Lastly, I wanted my son Brandon to know that I felt his pain so I wrote this for him.

-KENYON-

Well, we're glad we got to hear from this next young writer again. However, we wish he could've taught us something about what he's doing over there at Glen Mills. We heard it is a pretty good program, so we're interested in the kinds of things he's learning over there. We can tell his past life is still calling him, but one has to be wise and remember that the call is probably the same call that got him locked up in the first place. Again, he's writing from Glen Mills School in Concordville, Pennsylvania. Hopefully, he'll be able to keep in touch.

What's Really Good With The Beat

I ain't talked to y'all in a minute you know ya' boy been at the Mills holdin' it down but I wanted to let y'all know I ain't forgot about y'all. I been up here at Glens Mills for 11 months and been down for 18 months all together and I aint seen my bra in like 20 months.

We used to do everything together from taking these lil' females to the movies to buyin' cars and pullin' all nighters and pushin' that work hard like Apes in the jungle ya' heard. My bra gets out 2 months before me but this time it aint straight to the block for us we tryna take a trip to Jamaica and I want to let him know that I got a baby on the way by that one that stay on top of the hill by our block.

But to y'all that's locked up you can find ya' self in Glen Mills but everybody can't get it right so you're gonna have to make that change on citas.

The Changes

My ninja I just came off my home pass yeah the Mills let ya' boy go home for 9 days. It was gravy but I was hot 'cause none of my real ones was out there. My backbone at the Ranch holdin' it down. It's good I'ma see him in a few.

It was dry in the city I didn't see nobody out there so for most of the time I stayed in my spot in Oakland blew grapes all night celebrated my B-Day wit' my lil' boo brought me a Lex and we slid out to my spot something like Bonnie and Clyde ya' heard. You already know I had on my hoodie and my bauds like a boss would and I can't wait 'till me and my bra reunite ya' heard.

Stats Of Disillusion

Clear the capitalistic cobwebs from your eyes;
Dare to notice the shattered pieces of our broken lives.
Pay the overdue reparations for your civil rights crimes,
Be honest with yourself and cease your wicked lies.
Finger points at a young man: "uncle Sam wants you!"
In the name of "Freedom?!"
Doesn't your conscience taunt you?
Thousands of young souls lost;
Don't the headstones haunt you?
Bush, still smiling at the cameras?
Glad because it's not you?
In this land of "liberty," from which hypocrisy hails,
Money is God, God is money, and the hunger for power prevails;
In the heart of the homeland, its very own system fails.
Wrong nationality?
Police brutality and over-crowded jails.
Soldiers ingrained with hate, kill for "patriotic" beliefs
Death is just a hobby for the American commander-in-chief.
Napalm cremation,
Devastation,
Masters of war and grief.
Spreading "democracy," one country at a time,
Unrelenting,
No relief.
And still, your war-room fascists create neurotic plans
To wage a "war on drugs" and decimate foreign lands.
In the end, millions are slaughtered for not submitting to your demands
Uncle Sam, why do your so-called "heroes"
Have so much innocent blood upon their hands?

Writing from the Crossroads Correctional Center in Cameron, Missouri, we give you a man who really knows what he believes in. He speaks about politics with a very sharp and refined point of view. We have no choice but to find his thoughts refreshing. He knows how to express himself in a way that will definitely convince you that he knows what he's talking about. And after reading his very hard hitting ideas, you'll see that he does know what he's talking about. We'll leave this introduction at that because he speaks volumes for himself. We really hope he continues to bless us with his incredible writing. Thank you for your very intelligent thoughts.

Ask Yourself

Does the end justify the means?
Is life truly what it seems?
If you hear the echoes of the man's screams,
Sentence a man to death, can you watch him die-
And feel remorse in your heart when his family cries?
If he were one of your own, would it still be wise
To strap him in an electric chair and let the sparks fly?
When it hits close to home, do the rules then change?
When it's one of your own don't it feel strange
To see him dragged to the gurney in steel cuffs and chains,
A needle in his arms to stop his heart and brain?
Sure changes things when it's someone you know,
When you raised him from a baby and watched him grow.
Now he's a man of his own, living on Death Row,
Waiting for the date that says it's his time to go.
As the day gets closer, don't you feel the fright?
You've known since day one, the system ain't right.
Now it's one of your own, you want to rally and fight;
Don't want your baby to fade away because the state's taken his life.

In this land of "liberty," from which hypocrisy hails,
Money is God, God is money, and the hunger for power prevails

Consequences

He put down his college books and picked up an M-16,
Traded in the Levi's for camouflage green,
Did a few months in basic training,
And kissed his family good-bye,
Now he's fighting in Iraq for his life over a political lie.
He thought he had an obligation as an American man,
But now he's fighting a war that he doesn't understand.

Political propagandists waging a self interest war,
"Democracy" is an oil stain beneath the blood and gore.
Too late, there's no escape from, this murderous illusion,
It's master Bush's mass abuse and mass confusion.

After two short moths he's returning home,
And the penalty is great;
With the stars and stripes draped over his coffin,
He's flown back to the states.
His poor mother cries and his father's silent
During the twenty-one gun salute.

Now all that remains of a 20-yer-old boy
Is a medal and spit-shined boots…

Perpetual Anarchism

Tear down the stars and stripes and burn it,
Embrace ideology and learn it.
Teach your children the real facts of history,
Why the U.S. evades the truth remains a mystery.
Open up this racist fraud, forget your orders!
Put the Christian right back in its place,
Raze the prison walls unlock the gates.
Give the First Nation People back their land,
This is true meaning of anarchy, understand?!
Take the millions of homeless people off the streets,
Make sure they have clothing, shelter, and plenty to eat.
Remove the pompous judges from their perches,
Prohibit political lying agendas from the churches.
Bring the beast to its knees
Tear off its head!
Liberate the White House
Paint it red!
Disarm every weapon of the war machine,
Open college doors to the poor; make education free.
Autonomy breeds liberty without capitalism,
Live free;
Express your dreams;
Perpetual anarchism!

The Freedom Diet

Bloated twisted emptiness-
Intestines seized
By savage cramps
Of starvation.

Left alone,
Wondering
And asking, "Why?"

No answers from within
The devastation,
Desolation
And ruin.
Just a young child
Too weak to cry,
Slowly dying
From U.S. "democracy" and "liberation."

The Breeding Ground Of A Revolution

The strike against them will be made when they least expect it,
They think our class is weak, so they'll never respect it.
They put meth and crack in the streets to dilute our minds;
They put guns in our hands so we'll kill our own kind.
They make laws and pass bills to limit our choices,
They build prisons and death-rows to silence our voices.
The media tells stories instead of real news,
They don't expose crooked police or prisoner abuse.
From their lofty high-rises they look down on us,
For too long we've been blind to the oppression that surrounds us.
But, look around us…
They cut back college grants so we can't better our lives,
Now the military offers a "bonus" to those who don't die.
Would you like to buy a home or give your kids an education?
Just enlist in the army and go kill a whole nation.
They'll call you a national hero and you'll be adored by others,
Because your covertly gassed babies and executed their mothers.
Life, liberty and happiness: it's just a mirage,
And you're an over-rated killer with medals and camouflage,
But you now deep in your heart that it's a terrible sin
So, how can you possibly feel proud to be an American?
Now, think again…
For those of us who are conscious and aware of our fate,
They'll label us "terrorists" and "enemies of the state."
We'll be fighting the beast and its evil beliefs,
It's corrupt, murderous henchmen and commander-in-chief.
The president; a true puppet master of oppressive precedent,
The nation's capital only true hell-bent resident.
He's following in his father's footsteps for there are shoes to be filled;
No WMD's found and over 2000 young kids in Iraq killed.
Be in their army fool — "Be all you can be"
But dead ears can't hear the cries of Lady Liberty.

A Democratic Society

Welcome to America friend- the so-called land of the brave,
Where the rich build dreams on poor dead men's graves,
Where history is taught from fraudulent propaganda pages,
And it's poverty stricken citizens are locked up in steel and concrete cages.
This isn't my land-
This isn't your land.
It was built from slave labor- the fruits of the red and black hand.
Just ask the true Native American's, whose rights were deprived,
Were they greeted with open arms or murdered when the pilgrims arrived?
Rape, plunder, pillage — inevitable desecration
That's the sorry and true history of this sadistic, evil nation.

Forced permutation
Push the blindfold from your eyes and see the evil lies,
While the rich get richer, the poor class dies.
In this stolen blood stained land, money represents power,
As the skyline is over-shadowed by prison walls and gun towers.
If we the poor don't rise as one and stand together as one
We'll slowly be condemned to our deaths as one.
For these sadistic despotic rules there's only one solution;
Our class must stand as one for a mighty revolution!

Birth Of A Menace

I had a lot of big dreams as a young kid,
Tried to make people proud by what I did.
Tried to make future plans with happy concepts;
Swore to never follow Dad in his footsteps.
Tried to keep my head up, despite his beatings-
Echoed screams, mama's pleading,
Lay dying, broke and bleeding.
At an early age, I realized, "you're on your own kid;"
Sick and tired of the pain and broken-home shhh.
Had a heart of stone from such an early age,
The results of being beat, broke and stated-raised.
Now they say I'm a menace, and they fear me,
But all those years I begged for help, they didn't hear me!
All alone and once again in the prison system,
Crazy thoughts in my mind, I can't resist 'em.
Grew up just like the man I always hated,
The next 34 years of my life; incarcerated.
All the ones family and friends who promised me they would be there,
Can kiss my narrow white ass for pretending that they did care.
I am merely the result of how family and the corrupt system made me;
Now they can't face the truth, so they evade me.
Once again I realize, "You're on your own, son."
It's hard to miss a loving family when I've never really known one.
No phone calls home can't seem to shorten the distance,
When they've all turned their backs on my existence.
Now a dark little cell in the system is my home,
Where I hear the echoed whisper, "You're all alone."
"You're all alone, on your own…"

Ad-Seg

Solid steel door
Slams shut
With a vengeance

Whispery echoes
Of laughter
Lurk in the corners
Like cobwebs

Reminding me
Of the sixth sense
That we (in here) know
All
Too
Well
The sick sense
Of deprivation…

Shattered
Shrill screams
Broken sleep
Living this vivid nightmare
Over and over again.

He vents
His rage
Unrelenting
Unleashing
Swinging hate
Pain
Fury
Broken weeping

Please don't hurt her (no more).
Unspeaking bruised and bleeding.
Help wails in the distance (please hurry).
Don't be scared-
Don't cry (please don't).
It's going to be okay (I hope)…

Dedicated to and written for my Mom who my father beat to death.

Evil Lurks Behind The Bush

Nightly news clips get censored and edited,
Countries get vaporized; the US gets credited.
The innocent chant, "Oil for food — food for oil,"
But we can't salvage a damn thing from blood-soaked soil!
Bush says, "We're hated for our freedom, and American ways"
But this thing he calls "freedom" sends millions to their graves.
If a man's not a Christian. Does that mean he must pay
And be crushed to death beneath the jackboots of the USA?
Now Bush has sent his so-called "freedom-fighters" out,
And countries are terrorized, crushed, and bombed out.
The tension is high and fate is turning
With vision of devastation and bodies burning
Children crying out for their missing mothers;
Fathers burying sons and sisters burying brothers.
Greed and hatred lead to crossing lines
Streets covered in rubble,
Fields full of land mines.
So much death and destruction in the name of "nationality;"
If you don't embrace American beliefs, you'll become another casualty.
Headlines…
Statistics…
Another deadly sequel.
Why doesn't the "Land of the free" treat It's own citizens equal?
Imperialistic agendas cloaked in red, white, and blue;
You pledge allegiance to this country; but will they pledge it to you?!
Mr. President, if you call this freedom,
Then I don't want to be free
I don't want a Third World nightmare
To be my American dream.

Where Is Your God?

When the tsunami hit and devastated a whole town;
When the earthquake struck and brought building down;
When the airplanes flew into the sides of the World Trade Center towers;
When the videotaped hostage begged to live for one more hour;

Where was your God?

When a father beats his child on a daily basis;
When the oppressed cower in fear under the boots of racists;
When a mother sells her soul for a hit of meth or crack;
When the police fires warning shots into a young kid's back;

Where was your God?

When poor people must sleep on the rich nation's streets;
When lower-class families can't even afford to eat;
When an innocent person is condemned to Death Row;
When a Catholic alter boy falls victim to a homosexual priest's dark soul;

Where is your God?

Ghost Town, USA

Today's news is reporting stories about nothing new.
And Washington's starting statistics that aren't even close to true.
"The crime rate's dropping," bureaucrats are surmising,
But in my hood the system's blind to the death toll rising.

Screams if you want to, the echoes will haunt you.
How can you trust a system that just oppresses and taunts you?
Got the police cruisin' by with that power gleam in their eyes;
Another man gone to the Pen; another fatherless child cries.
They played a 30-second sound byte on the 6 o'clock news;
10 billion to the military and they're closing down our schools.

Last night, midnight, the police swore they saw a knife;
Five warning shots to the chest took the young boy's life.
He was only eleven and shouldn't have met this deadly end;
In his dying has was this murderous slaughter with their ignorant small talk
While his poor mother stares and cries at the chalk lines on the sidewalk.

Eyes are closed and backs are turned to the plight or our kind;
Now I can clearly see he true meaning of "No child left behind."
On the other side of the great divide,
In an upper class town,
They exchange white washed lies with that death gleam in their eyes…
While they claim…
"The crime rate's going down…"

A Heart Beats Within

We all can't be saints
And not all of us are sinners
But we all have a heart
That beats within us

Listen to it when its speaks…
Listen carefully
Your heart never lies
It just dies eventually.
The heart that beats within us

In times when we break down
And fall apart,
"Trust Me"
What keeps us together is our heart.
A heart that beats within us

No need to follow no one
Just follow your heart
It will set you free from these dark
And lonely bars
Trust in God, trust your heart
The heart that beats within us

Just Thoughts…

If it would have been John
It would have been wrong

But since it's Jose
It's okay

If it would have been you
It's 25 to life

But since it was them
Oohh it's all right

If you killed
The consequences are real

When they kill
They get time off to chill

Tell me… Where's the justice in that
Murder is murder even if you have a badge.

ERICSON VENTURA

This next writer was one of our first Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall writers, but now we regret to inform you that he's incarcerated in Santa Clara County Jail fighting a case that he says he didn't have anything to do with. He's a really good writer and poet (we really enjoyed "A Heart Beats Within") but what strikes us most is his motivation to get out and do something positive. As a matter of fact, it sounds like he was already on the right track before being detained for something he says he didn't do. We appreciate his insights and we know you readers will too… So please, read on…

We all can't be saints
And not all of us are sinners

In Loving Memory

Tears stream down my cheeks
And stain these orange county sheets
My cries silenced by these walls made of Concrete

I cry for my fallen friend,
Not for me
I refuse to accept defeat-

I cry for the children who lost a good father,
Who they will never get to meet
He now only exists in their memories…
I truly hope they are sweet

Now I must be strong
I must hold on
For justice will prevail
I'll see you in heaven,
We've already been through hell

Dedicated To My Friend
-Jose Canas-

A good friend, husband, and father
(Rest In Peace)
08.21.75-09.12.07

To The Beat Within Fam

Greetings and salutations to all you good people. I hope this missive of mine finds you all doing well. I know it's been a while since we last spoke, and I kinda of disappeared. But I can never forget a group who has inspired me since my youth, and brought out this gift in me. The gift to write. Thank you.

Since the last time I was blessed with the opportunity to work along with you. I set off to, with a mission in mind to find my calling.

Motivated by the few, but truly life changing experiences I had in my short time with The Beat Within. (Our protest in Stanford meeting state attorney general Bill Lockeyer. That was fun! Speaking at capital hill, and meeting senator Gloria Romero. That was a honor.) Even speaking on the prison radio talk show was inspiring.

After all these blessings I felt like my voice needed to be heard. Since then me and my partner in rhyme Mr. K founded in '06 our Latin hip hop group "Conflikto Armando" inspired by the 12 year armed conflict in our home counter of El Salvador. And of course we created a myspace that feat. a few street savvy mix-tape cuts which was getting love from the Salvadorian community. We started that in April '07. Since then we were blessed with meeting Santos a highly regarded Salvadorian rapper. His first project was acclaimed by B.B.C world news "Dialectos natives or native dialects" through him we got the OK to work with his inner circle like pescozada who are big in El Salvador and Spain. We were in the process of hooking up with Rob West who is big in L.A. in my opinion what we were writing gave me a new purpose in life.

I was still involved very much with my community. Of course I was present at the immigration rally in S.F., and was even interviewed by the San Francisco Radio News Project. Recently I was invited in both Sunnyvale and Mountain View. That including the mayors and police chiefs. I also had just signed up to volunteer at the Day Laborer Center in Mountain View. I didn't get the chance to do neither.

Currently I am being housed in the San Jose County Jail, held on murder charges. In some way I feel like a political prisoner, a victim of circumstances. I had just moved back to the area four months ago. I had moved to Salinas to give my aunt moral support. My fourteen year old cousin was arrested in being charged with attempted murder. I wrote him and spoke to him from a (I've been there point of view.) He is yet to be sentenced. I also accompanied her on her oldest son was being released I also spoke to him.

When I returned I was looking for a place. My friend Jose Cañas offered me a room in his apt when he shared with his wife and baby boy twins. It was convienent for me since my partner in rhyme lived next door where our recording equipment was at. I quickly got a job at a Bevmo and kept myself busy working. I still felt something was missing, and even began to feel it was a mistake to return to the area. Crazy huh.

Instead of worrying I began the process of enrolling myself at the Los Angeles Recording School. I even took a trip to L.A. with my family and fiancé to check it out. It was impressive. I began to feel good about my progress.

Around the third month of returning an incident occurred in the neighbor of Ayala Dr. that showed the signs of the trouble that laid ahead. In about July a trio of gang members showed up. Words were gathered on a flight of stairs. The trio charged in a attempt to stab one of the teens. This event led to the next.

About a month later. According to the press, a large gang brawl broke out around 10:30 p.m. in which a gang member was stabbed to death. I was in my room when I heard the commotion from my window I saw little so I went to the living room and saw the large crowd running around in the street and it slowly progressed down the street.

Now here's the part I don't understand. None of individuals who were in the brawl have not been arrested. And I remind you that this is their beef, not mine or my roommates. Second, police know who is responsible for the stabbing. It's rumored that these gentlemen are long gone to Mexico.

So now a month later the blame is being pointed at me and my roommate. Why I don't know. We both had left that life in the past, yet it is our past that allows, cops to blame us, plus we LIVE THERE the guilty parties did not. I think it's convenient for them to point the finger at us. Like I said I feel like a political prisoner, a victim of circumstances.

I was arrested 09.12.07 on my way to work walking were I was kicked to the ground, elbows scraped and bloody (they have pics) had a boot placed to my neck and back. I was in shock! I just remembered a brand new mustang but me off, some bald guy hop out with a blue shirt and jeans with a chrome pistol pointed at me face. I honestly thought my life was over. My roommate was not as lucky. In their attempt to arrest him (My roommate had just got in his car going to work) they came at him the same way. I believe he panicked as well (I thought it was a gang member) but reacted and attempted to drive away. From his wife (she was a witness) I heard they tazered him or the vehicle not sure which made him crash into a large blue garbage container. He then made another attempt to leave, and was fatally shot to death by Sunnyvale Police Officers. Bastards!! His wife and children were present, and that really breaks my heart.

Now my friend is dead and I didn't get to say goodbye. I'm sitting in a cell fighting for my life. Just when everything was behind me, they drag me back in while the real killers are free.

I feel like I'm in a movie. A real one I know things will workout and my name will be cleared. But the pain has been caused and it will leave a scar in my life forever.

As if being locked up half of my teenage life isn't enough. Since I was fourteen till I knew I was 20, J-Hall, the ranch, C.Y.A., I knew that was enough for me. But how can I prove my change when I'm always judged by my past. It's not right.

Those of you know me from back in the day know I'm not the criminal they make me out to be. When I met The Beat Within in '97, '98 (original B-7 writer Santa Clara County's first edition) I was a big hip hop head I was heavy into graffiti. I didn't join a gang till I went to CYA at the age of 16 that's just how it goes.

But that's not me. I hope I have your support in proving my innocence. They pick the wrong guy to blame. People always remember the bad things you do in life, but I want to be remembered for the good I've done. I extend to do so.

People always remember the bad things you do in life, but I want to be remembered for the good I've done.

MARCOS CASSANI

I Know I Would My Friend

I'm sitting here in my cell, completely alone,
Looking out my window to nothing, oh how I wish I was home.
Sometimes I feel depressed, yeah I feel down and out,
I'm always wondering what my life is all about
I ask God why do I live this life of incarceration
Why am I behind bars, behind barbed wire?
Why can't I be home like a normal person playing Playstation
But even though I'm locked up, and rotting away,
I still find time to smile, during, these lonely days.
You don't know what it is to live 24/7 under a gun,
I still have hope because I have a date,
But what about these lifers, they have none.
But still I sit in my cell, and yes I break down in tears,
Even though I have two months left,
I'm surrounded by dudes with hundreds of years.
I try not to think of that, because it makes me blue,
I used to be that little boy who
Wanted to be a doctor, look at me now, who would have knew.
I've left myself down, my family and the ones who I adore,
But it's actually quite sad, because I'm capable of so much more.
Like writing my poetry, right off the top of my head,
But here you find me rotting away in a cell instead.
But my feelings are being heard through The Beat Within
If you're still young and you can change your life,
Do it, because I know I would my friend

This next writer blows us away with a great poem this week. He talks about regretting ever coming to jail. He talks about living his days under a gun and spending his time with lifers who he feels deserve something better than a life of incarceration. But what strikes us the most in this poem is the last two lines, "If you're still young and you can change your life, do it, because I know I would my friend." That statement encompasses a great aspect of The Beat Within. So many times we go through life not realizing the grave consequences to our behaviors that by the time we're experiencing those consequences it's too late. Some would say it's never too late while others would argue that there are times where it's too late. Do you want to be taken away from what you love? Are you excited by the thoughts of going to prison? Is it a rite of passage for you? Well, if you answered yes to any of these questions we think you should read this poem over and over again because it may give you a different perspective, or it may not. Whatever the case, this is a well-written poem and he's writing from a California State Prison in San Diego, CA.

TYCO

What a great BWO section... And this next writer is just putting fuel to the flame by adding a great love/hate poem to the reading. We're sure many people can feel his pain because it's not easy maintaining a romantic relationship, full of intimacy, closeness, and affection in a place that's isolated, distant, and restricted. We've witnessed many men stress over their girlfriends while doing time and it's a painful sight to see. For what more helpless feeling in the world than one where you're not informed about what's going on with the one you're thinking about most. He's writing from a California State Prison in San Diego, CA.

Love And Hate

Where are you when I need you the most
Why do I feel like you're just a ghost
I'm finally ready but feel it's too late
Guess their reality is a thin line between love and hate
Because I love and hate you at the same time
For making me wonder if you're still mine
Are you paying me back for what I put you through
You picked a heck of a time to show me who's a fool
I'm losing my cool and fell out of place
Especially when I think of you or my case
I love and hate you if you could make sense of that
My feelings are crossed. I'm going to snap
Can you at least write a "F-U-Note"
Or if you still care give me a sign so I'll know there's still hope
I hear all these rumors and feel like flashin'
I know they're just rumors because I know how you be acting
Or am I wrong. Let me know because I'm losing my mind
What's the get down. Shoot me a line
Come on Sabrina. I know we got our issues
But what you're doing right now definitely doesn't fit you
What happened to "Love" or did I mess that up
Love don't stop it's forever, I don't give a f***
I'm so weak in the knees I can hardly speak...
I'm mad at the world grinding my teeth
Incarcerated I'm handicapped, lost in a maze
Can't do nothing about nothing but write on this page
So if I don't make it back to the life we once knew
You will always be remembered because, "I love and hate you."

DORTELL WILLIAMS

Writing is so important in an era where people gossip, think they know everything about you, and paint pictures of who you are through things like criminal records. It's of importance because it allows you to document your own history. It also allows people to get intimate with who you are without getting too close, if that makes sense. People can feel you without feeling you when you write. We wish certain people in our workshops felt the same way Dortell does because that would show that they actually care about their own well-being. A lot of times we get frustrated because there are those who don't take themselves, their situations, and The Beat Within workshops seriously. Unfortunately, they're the ones that'll have to pay the price later on in life. But Dortell, really gets the importance of writing and we appreciate his words. He's writing from a California State Prison in Lancaster, CA, and hopefully we'll hear from him soon.

Our Eternal Urban Shakespeare

One of the things I like most about writing is its potential longevity. Once our thoughts are penned they can be as permanent as the ink they're written with.

The playwright, actor, poet, and English writer William Shakespeare (1564-1616) is undeniable proof of that. His centuries old writings still teach, inspire and entertain us to this day.

Likewise, with the posthumous release of Tupac Shakur's eleventh album since his tragic death ten years ago, it seams Tupac's materials have ascended him to forever be the urban Shakespeare of our day.

Four of his after death albums have hit No.1 on the pop and RandB/hip hop charts, Tupac holds the Guinness Book of World Records title as the most successful rapper of all time; and his writing have spawned not only the "2Pac Community" which promotes and rewards creative writing, but also a lucrative clothing line called "Makaveli Branded".

Tupac's newest release "Pac's Life" will, no doubt, further polish the actor-rapper's phenomenal legacy. Reading, taking in vocabulary, and pushing a pen did all of that for Tupac. I wonder what such discipline can do for the rest of us?

MICHAEL MCKINNEY

This next writer sent us an enormous amount of poetry within three different letters and we're just catching up to it all now. With some of the poetry, "I Can Feel Your Pain, Things Generated From Inside Of Self, and My Love For You" are all examples, he uses repetition as a way to convey the force and passion he shares with those particular statements. It's also very apparent that God is a huge part of his life right now and we're sure that because he now believes in a higher power, situations and struggles are easier to cope with. He starts off with a tribute to his mother and it's one of the most beautiful poems to a mother we've read in a long time. It's raw and from the heart. His "run-on" way of writing gives the piece a good effect because it shows the reader that he didn't prepare this like a speech, but rather he's "winging it" and speaking straight from his soul. That's exactly the same thing good mothers do when they speak to their children. From "Enduring The Struggle" to giving "Inmate Prayers" we can tell that this man has a gigantic heart. Now it bleeds through our pages and onto y'all. He's writing from a Florida State Prison in Raiford, Florida.

To My Mother

Mother I cannot turn back the hands of time.
But you are one mother I will always keep in mind
Your love and you have always stood by me through my hardest times.
Your love embraced me when love was hard to find,
And to me my dear mother you will always be one of a kind,
And mother unto this day I will love you all the time.
And mother when you saw my mind was troubled
And my action was getting out of control,
You kept giving all your love to me until better days unfold
And you kept your loving arms open to me

Even when the years went to taking they toll.
And the love you have always showed me will never grow old.
And you are my number one mother, as it will always be told.
I love you sweet mother cause your ways are like a rose.

He's Forever With Me

God is forever with me.
Even though life has offered me so many hardships.
So much adversity, so many obstacles.
I have felt so much pain.
It's done been times I don't almost went insane.
But my better judgment was always informing me
That God is forever with me and he will never forsake me.
And knowing this alone is what kept me holding on.
And the reason I know it was a God. And he was with me.
'Cause there have been many times
I could have lost my life over nonsense
But I made it through a lot of death struck times.
Which was times that came up in my life very often.
But he was always with me.
Many thought I was not going to make it to see eighteen years old.
The word was always that young kid lil Michael,
Was going to get killed at a very young age,
But it never went down like that.
'Cause little that they know he was forever with me.
Now I did end up in prison at a very young age
But it was still all good 'cause God was forever with me.
He was always on my side forever more.
'Cause that's what god offers.
But I was too young and foolish to understand
That god was forever with me.

Inmate Prayer

I thank you lord for waking me up to another beautiful day that you have created. Giving me the chance and opportunity to be a part of your creation. I thank you lord for this blessed moment. And lord I want to thank you for the breath that you have allowed me to breathe right now in this present moment that brings to me life.

Lord I ask you to strengthen and protect all the weaker areas of me. Lord I ask for your wisdom, knowledge and understanding. Lord I ask for your patience, courage, and openness. Lord helps me to be successful in just about everything that I do. Lord I ask you to forgive me for each and every one of my sins. Lord let your will be done into my life. Empower me to live by faith and always count on you for each and everything.

Lord help me to accept the things I cannot change. Lord help me to have a change of heart. Lord use me. Clean me and bless me. Lord I ask you to guide my path. Lord please instill in me calmness, good, humor, strength, kindness. Lord help me to seek the best way to bring about that greater self within me. Lord please help me to master temptation. So you could master me. Lord help me to always be obedient to you call. Lord bring in to my life a perfect friend, one that will always tell me what is right. Lord watch over my mother, my brother, my sister, my niece, all my nephews and watch over the rest of my family and friends protect them bless them and be with them. Amen

Enduring The Struggle

Times are hard but I must be a man
In the struggle and pain is something I must be able to stand.
Enduring the struggle with all I can
My heart and mind have been conditioned to take it
And it's a must that I will make it.
I will keep enduring the struggle with out ever trying to fake it. Enduring the struggle being the best I could be
Is the only way I know how to make it.
'Cause fakers don't last in the struggle.
They fall to the wayside like no other.
Enduring the struggle is what life is all about so in this struggle
You must not give up.
And the struggle is where the strongest of mans
Should take the hardest stands.
Enduring the struggle with an everlasting hand.
And when the going gets rough and the struggle gets tough
I must keep on striving and never give up.
Enduing the struggle is what many others have done way before my time.
So enduring the struggle is not one of a kind.
Many leaders of all race and color
Who have stood up in the struggle
Through the worst of times
And endured the struggle with a very strong mind.
And they never left the struggle until they was dead and gone
And right now today they name are still carrying on.
And I will keep enduring the struggle 'cause I have made it my home
And in this struggle I sometimes feel the need to quit
That's when I push myself with every lil' bit
Of will power that I have within
'Cause in this struggle I will never bend.
I will keep up my sight to the very last end.
And me and the struggle will always be the best of friends.
'Cause we can relate to each other
'Cause me and the struggle can't live without one another.
While enduring struggle I have learned to be humble and at peace,
So in the struggle I will not be wiped off my feet.
Enduring the struggle is no fun and games.
But I must keep enduring until I love the pain.

I Can Feel Your Pain

I can feel your pain,
'Cause I know what it feels like when you are hurting on the inside.
With nowhere to turn.
I can feel your pain showing every bit of my concern.
I can feel your pains 'cause I done been there before.
I can feel your pain when you are hurting like hell.
I can feel your pain when you are at the stage to rebel,
I can feel your pain after being locked away
For so many years in a jail cell.
I can feel your pains when the going gets hard.
I can feel your pain. When you are in need to turn to god.
I can feel your pains when you are in need for an answer.
I can feel your pains when your life is at ransom.
I can feel your pains when you are alone.
I can feel your pains when you are in need of a home.
I can feel your pains hurting down to your bones.
I can feel your pain just as I can feel my own.
I can feel your pains when you are fighting hard.
I can feel your pains right down in the bottom of my heart.
And I know pains really hurt
And from your pains learn how not to live in the dirt.
I can feel your pain
Because my life has been brought up in the struggle.
I can feel your pains when I reach out my hand.
I can feel your pain when it's time to take a stand.

You Are My Shadow

You are the shadow that shows up on time.
You are the shadow I have been in search for.
But yet been so hard to find.
One day you will forever be mine.
And you are like my own shadow.
That I can't shake
And all the kindness you bring to me will never to taking to be fake. Just hearing the name of shadow,
Keeps my mind alerts, you are one shadow.
That I will not bring upon you any hurt.
So would you be my shadow, into death to us apart from this earth.
I know that life shadows come and go just like the wind will blow.
But the shadow of my life no one will ever know.
You are the shadow that comes to me between rays of light,
That will make any darkness bright.
You are to me better than any shadow land,
'Cause the love of you shadow, will always stand.
And without a shadow of a doubt
I know shadow you would be the best shadow you can.
From one shadow to another.
Shadow with a strong kind of embrace,
When I close my eyes at night I can't help but see your face.
And you are one shadow, in my mind that can never be erased.
And so many shadow times with you,
What help keeps you forever so safe.
Shadow, you are my shadow,
That observe me closely and secretly knowing I will stand the test,
And what you see in me will be the best.
So never count me out like you count out the rest.
So shadow, with me just keep being your best.
You are the shadow of my light, you are the shadow, I can't hold back.

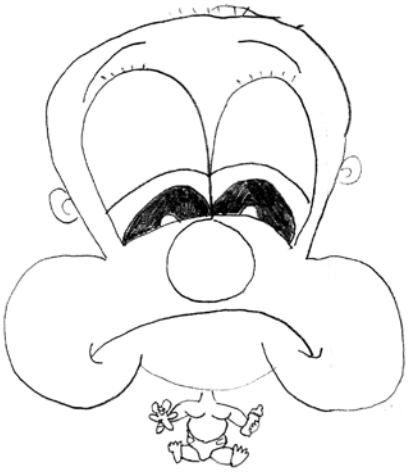
Things Generated From The Inside Of Self

If one just start taking sometime out to look inside themselves we would come to learn and realize that so much love, so many skills and potential are right there on the inside of self. The true self has so much meaning on the inside. But when always looking on the outside of self for answers and a way to live, and this only allows one to consistently take away from our self each day. Not wanting to look on the inside of self. And make changes within themselves for the better.

Therefore if one wants to be loved, look on the inside of self. It's right there. If one wants some peace and harmony and tranquility look inside self it's right there. If one's looking for some understanding look on the inside of self it's right here. If you are looking for some respect look on the inside of self its right. If you are looking for something beautiful, look on the inside of self. It's right there. If you are looking for someone caring and sharing, look on the inside of self. It's right there. If one want some kindness, look inside of self. It's right there. If one are looking for some grace look on the inside of self its right there. If you are looking for some wholeness look on the inside of self. It's right here. If you are looking for a deeper connection, look on the inside of self. It's right there.

If you are looking for some honesty look on the inside of self. It's right there. If you are looking for some courage look on the inside of self. It's right there. If you are looking for some spirituality look on the inside of self. It's right there. If you are looking for ways to live in reality of the truth just look on the inside of self. It's right there. If you are looking for some intelligence look on the inside of self. It's right there. If you are looking for some balance look on the inside of self. It's right there. If you are looking for some true identity look on the inside of self. It's right there.

What's on the inside of self are much greater than the outside self-image and the things of the world. And the more one looks on the inside of one self, the less hard one would have to struggle to make one life more and more beautiful. And now days there are not many people in this world who takes the time out to look or realize that all these things and so much more sit right on the inside of self. If one wants to go somewhere that's up right, unique, beautiful, holy, calm, and where so many jewel or look on the inside of self. It's right there.



We usually hear great things about the Glen Mills School in Concordville, Pennsylvania, where this next writer is sending this array of poems from. But like with everything in life, there are two sides to this coin. He gives us the ugly side to the coin in a few of his several poems. Some are about love and the trials and tribulations that come along with that emotion while others are about his days in the hall. He's made his journey to a whole 'nother state, but has continued to keep his journey through writing a part of ours as well. We'll leave you with a great quote from his poem, "A Day In The Hall." "It's still too early to sleep, so your mind drifts to the streets and all that you left behind. You think about your family and if your punishment fits the crime. These are the type of days that we in the hall face. You hear the click of the door again and your day begins the same." Well, hopefully his day will be a little different when he receives this latest issue with his piece in our most cherished Beat Without section."

A Day In The Hall

Taking a deep breath
As he wakes up for another day
The click at his door
Means it's time to get his tray

Already starting to stress
Because he knows the day's schedule

Hygiene's coming up
Then it will be time to hit the classroom
Same old teacher there
Expecting homeboys to do the work.

Instead they stay talking
While counselors are feeling urked
Giving people hours
Sending homeboys to their rooms

Contraband is found
By the staff that's searching beds
Nobody giving ownership
To the small piece of lead

Lunch is finally hear
Time to go back to the room
Thinking about your girl
And what she's up to

Wanting to get sentenced
As a court date comes near
But all they do is continue it

Your anger builds up fast
And you start to get mad
A tear starts to shed
But you wipe it away fast

Going back to the unit
With our hands behind your back
Thinking about what happened
In the last five minutes that passed.

You go straight to the courtyard
To play handball with the homies
They asked you what happened at court
But all you can say is nothing.

They tell you don't trip bro
It happens to the best of us
You say yeah I know
And leave the conversation
To rest

Your hour comes to an end
So it's back to your room for now

You show respect to all the homeboys then take it straight down
Your day comes to an end when you lay down in your bed

It's still too early to sleep
So your mind drifts to the streets
And all that you left behind

Meeting Someone Special

We met each other in class
When I asked to borrow a pen
You smiled and said sure
And started looking in your bag

I asked you what your name was as you answered I told you mine
Then we shook hands for the very first time

You helped me with math problems that I couldn't seem to understand
We built a little friendship but it only stayed in class.

I wanted to know more
About this beautiful girl I met
So I asked you for your number
Knowing I didn't have a chance

You told me no but only because your parents were very strict
I said oh it's cool thinking it's just some excuse
Two weeks past from that moment and you handed me a number
You said it's your new cell phone and I could call whenever.

I smiled and said I'd do that
I dialed your number when I got home
But was quick to hang up when I heard the ring tone

Thinking to myself what the hell is wrong with me
Just call her but then I think now
She's way out of my league

Eventually I built up the courage and called your cell phone
We started talking for minutes then they turned to hours
We got to know each other and would both call one another

I liked what was going on and the relationship we built together
From that moment on I knew I wanted to be with you forever
My wish almost came true until I got in trouble
I hurt you so much something I said I'd never do
I left you in the dark for 18 months of time.

I told you I was sorry knowing it won't get you back
If I told you that a million times
I really am sincere about everything I say
I learned to speak from the heart not just hollow lies from the brain.

I'm going to tell you one last time that you're the one for me
I love you with all my heart and want you to be with me.

A Path That Was Taught

An older brother making a path for the younger brother to follow
He led him to a field of violence with no hope for tomorrow
An older brother showed him the way to wear his pants and hair
He showed him how to fight and no matter what never be scared
An older brother living the life he was taught to live
By older generations the life that they taught him
An older brother charged with an assault with a deadly weapon
Pleading guilty to the charge and also taking gang enhancement
An older brother watching the younger brother go down for the same crime
But this time it's different they want to give him a lot more time
The younger brother looks up to the older brother for help
The older brother says sorry you have to figure it out yourself
As the older brother sits there thinking about what he's done
He led another family member to the system a system that's no fun
He tells the younger brother he's sorry for what he's done
By leading the wrong path he put him in a messed up situation
He can't do his younger brothers time for him
But he can change his path to a better way of life
So he tells his brother this and he says
If you do good for me then I'll do good for you
That's a pact made by two brothers a relationship that grew.

Before It Is Too late

If you have a tender message or a loving word to say
Do not wait till you forget it but whisper it today
The tender word unspoken, the letter never sent
The long forgotten messages, the wealth of love unspent
For these hearts are breaking for these some loved ones wait
So show them that you care for them before it is too late

Another Dream

A twinkle in her eye when she finally seen him home
A girl that was so happy to hear her boyfriend's tone
He was no different with a look that only she could give him
Tears of joy filled his face giving her a kiss without a moment to waste
Holding his love with so much passion
Not wanting to let go for an instant
Telling her he loves her and she doing the same
Being in each others presence forgetting about the pain
Just loving every feeling that is being expressed
It's time to get up Manuel and he awakes from his dream
Into an environment of stress
Where he cannot see his girl again until he goes back to

Erasers

Erasers are the nicest things of that there is no doubt
We write wrong words a few quick swipes and big mistakes fade out
And you will find erasers of a very different kind
Extremely helpful if you will try to bear these facts in mind
When you bump someone in a crowd and almost knock her down
A soft I'm sorry may bring smiles and rub out that old frown
Apologies, invariably obligate mistakes
And three small words I love you can erase the worst heartaches

As the older brother sits there thinking about what he's done
He led another family member to the system
a system that's no fun

A Vision

Days and days pass while they turn into weeks
It's been a couple of years since I was caught on the streets
Sent away far — actually to the other side of the map
Wishing away my time so I could finally go back
I see the golden state in my dreams at night
Just waiting for them to wake me up
So I can catch my plane flight
I know there's people waiting for me to come home
Especially my girl she makes me feel like a king on my thrown
These thoughts got my head spinning only a couple more months
To all locked down just keep your heads up.

Still Loving You

Catching the light of the stars above
Looking at the picture of the only girl that I love
Holding hands and blowing kisses
Smiling and laughing damn I miss this
Thinking of all the good times we had
Wishing I had a time machine to go back in the past
Wondering what you're up to and if you're thinking of me
But I know you are you told me so in my last dream
As the sky starts to lighten and the sun starts to show
A tear falls from my eye because I'm thinking about my girl
I hear her voice in the wind and smell her scent in the air
Only if I could tell her how much I still care.

Sentence a man to death, can you watch him die-
And feel remorse in your heart when his family cries?
If he were one of your own, would it still be wise
To strap him in an electric chair and let the sparks fly?

read the rest of Herbert's BWO piece on page 58